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THE SOCIAL PLAYS OF ARTHUR WING PINERO

THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY
THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH



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THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY
THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH



THE SOCIAL PLAYS OF
ARTHUR WING PINERO

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ARTHUR WING PINERO AT THE TIME OF THE PRODUCTION OF "THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY"

By Courtesy of Daniel Frohman

THE SOCIAL PLAYS OF ARTHUR WING PINERO

EDITED WITH A GENERAL INTRODUCTION
AND A CRITICAL PREFACE TO EACH PLAY
BY

CLAYTON HAMILTON
MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY

THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH

NEW YORK
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PREFACE

The present LIBRARY EDITION of the weightiest and most important plays of Sir Arthur Pinero has been edited with the kind co-operation of the author himself; his secretary, Miss Eveleen Mills; his London publisher, Mr. William Heinemann; and his American publishers, Messrs. Walter H. Baker & Co. of Boston. The editor is especially indebted to Mr. F. E. Chase, of Walter H. Baker & Co., for generously loaning the American copyrights of the plays that have been selected to appear in this LIBRARY EDITION.

In the United States of America, these plays have been issued, in the past, only in paper-covered volumes designed to satisfy the immediate and temporary needs of amateur actors. Prompt-copies of no less than thirty of the plays of Sir Arthur Pinero have been published, in paper covers, at the small price of fifty cents per volume, by Walter H. Baker & Co. of Boston, Samuel French of New York, and The Dramatic Publishing Company of Chicago. The present LIBRARY EDITION is issued with a hope that it may stimulate, in the United States, a more extensive and intensive study of the hitherto available editions of the plays of the greatest living dramaturgic craftsman in the English-speaking theatre.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.

NEW YORK CITY: 1917.



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GENERAL INTRODUCTION



GENERAL INTRODUCTION*

I

The existence of that modern drama in the English language to which it is now possible to point with pride was established at a date which is absolutely definite. The modern English drama was ushered into being on the night of May 27th, 1893, when *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* by Arthur Wing Pinero, was acted for the first time on the stage of the St. James's Theatre in London. This ambitious and successful composition was immediately recognised as the greatest play, originally written in the English language, that had been produced on any stage in the English-speaking world since the night of May 8th, 1777,—the date of the first performance of *The School for Scandal.* It is, of course, a debatable question whether or not this epoch-making drama has subsequently been surpassed by Pinero himself or by any of his more recent contemporaries; but the historical importance of Pinero's primary achievement has not been minimised but amplified by the perspective of a quarter of a century. It is now possible to assert with certainty that *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* at the time of its original production, was the *only* great play that had been written in the English language for one hundred and sixteen years.

Criticism should, of course, steer clear of that "historical fallacy" which was pointed out by Matthew Arnold as a dangerous, alluring pit-fall; and yet—in judging the dramatic work of Sir Arthur Pinero, together with that of his able and conscientious colleague, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones—it seems only fair to emphasise the fact that these two men were pioneers, and that—in a period which by most ob-

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servers was dismissed as hopelessly unpromising—they responded nobly to a faint-heard call and created a worthy English drama out of nothing.

Their rivals and contemporaries in more recent years have enjoyed the manifest advantage of writing for a theatre whose ideals had been already pointed in the new direction of "high seriousness" by Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones. Mr. George Bernard Shaw, who has done so much to enliven the modern English drama, did nothing to initiate it, except in his contributive capacity as a practicing dramatic critic. The plays of Mr. John Galsworthy, Mr. Harley Granville Barker, and many other earnest authors of the younger generation, could never have been undertaken except for the established fact that a serious theatre was already waiting to receive them. The programme of the Irish National Theatre Society—which was formulated by Mr. William Butler Yeats and Lady Augusta Gregory to further an insurrection against the technical formulas made popular by Pinero and Jones—owed its very inception to the pre-existence of a power against which it elected to rebel. No revolution—even though it be supported by so undeniable a genius as the late John Millington Syngé, who was endowed with the eloquence of angels—can be successfully undertaken unless there is already an established government sufficiently important to be worthy of a serious attack. Pinero and Jones have not only aided those successors who have chosen to follow in their footsteps, but they have also aided those successors who have chosen to attempt another path. By both parties among their younger rivals, their primacy has been recognised. And—to turn the search-light for a moment on America—it is undeniable that the most remarkable adventures that have been made in recent years by the playwrights of the United States have resulted in successes of technique,—that traditional technique which had already been established as a standard by Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones.

There is a proverb which tells us that it takes three genera-

tions to make a gentleman. Not less than three generations are customarily required to make a worthy work of art. It is, therefore, all the more remarkable that the modern English drama should have sprung full-grown from the forehead of Pinero, who entered the English theatre without the aid of any ancestors and made his way without the help of any brothers in the common cause, save only that of Mr. Jones. This dauntless and imaginative pioneer created—almost single-handed—that modern drama in the English language, of which, in recent years, we have become so justly proud. If *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* were not—as it surely is—a work of permanent importance, it would still be memorable as an epoch-making play. To write, at any time, a genuinely worthy drama should be regarded as sufficient an achievement to assure the author an honourable foot-note in the pages of enduring history; but to compose the one great play that had been written—in the most widespoken language of the world—throughout a period which had endured for sixteen years beyond a century, should be sufficient to entitle the successful playwright to the gratitude of generations yet unborn.

II

To "place"—historically—the achievements of Arthur Wing Pinero in the English theatre, it is necessary to inquire, first of all, into the causes of that astonishing sterility which had afflicted the English drama for more than a century before the date of the first production of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. That tremendous English drama which had gloriously overtopped the world in the period of Shakespeare had—because of many reasons—"miserably straggled to an end in sandy deltas." Before the advent of Pinero, the drama had ceased to exist, in the English-speaking countries, as a living art.

This utter obfuscation of the English drama may be



ascribed, historically, to four causes, which call for consideration in detail.—

In the first place, the English theatre had inherited a quite unwarranted distrust of all its undertakings from the embattled Puritans of the seventeenth century. To seek out and track down the initiation of this devastating influence upon our drama, the critic is required to delve backward into history. The noble tradition that had been established by Shakespeare was continued, in the next two generations,—with scarcely an appreciable impairment of its pristine vigour,—by John Fletcher and by James Shirley. But the career of Shirley was cut short by the convention of the Puritan Parliament of 1642, which summarily suppressed the current drama by forbidding any further performances of stage-plays within the jurisdiction of the provisional government.

Every theatre in England was required, by this edict of a Roundhead Parliament, to close its doors in 1642; and these doors continued to stand closed until the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. To awaken the imagination of the modern reader, it is important to cast emphasis upon the fact that, for a period of eighteen years, no performance of any stage-play was permitted by the Puritans in England. Eighteen years must be reckoned as very nearly an entire generation; and children who were born so late as 1639 were required to grow up to their majority without ever seeing any public exhibition of the drama.

Throughout this period of suppression, all the gentlemen of England—with one or two exceptions—were forced to live in France; and, during this long interim of exile, the earnest dramatists among them were persuaded to renounce the tradition of Shakespeare in favour of the tradition of Racine. The result was that when the English theatres were triumphantly re-opened in 1660, as an immediate result of the Restoration of Charles II, the sound tradition handed down from the reign of great Elizabeth had been broken irretrievably; and the new idol of the hour—for the tragic

drama—was not Shakespeare but Racine. Also, as a necessary retro-action from that decree by which the Puritans had closed the theatres in 1642, the comedy of the Restoration became at once outrageously immoral. A period of unreasonable restriction was followed inevitably by a period of illogical license. The brilliant comedies of such authors as Wycherley, Congreve, Vanbrugh, and Farquhar pretended to achieve a virtue by the valour of their immorality. Thereby they called down upon their heads the quite merited abuse of so respectable and militant a Puritan as Jeremy Collier. But, by this time, our English drama had degenerated to such a degree that it could no longer be purified without being reduced to a nonentity. When Sir Richard Steele and Colley Cibber—at the outset of the eighteenth century—sought to make our drama moral once again, they succeeded only in substituting the sugar of sentimentality for the salt of wit. Later in the eighteenth century, the latent healthy masculinity of the English drama was aroused once more to self-assertion by the ingratiating talent and brilliant genius of two gifted Irish playwrights,—Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. But, in the arms of these two authors, the English drama fainted, and appeared to pass away: and it was not again revived until more than a century had been recorded by the whirligig of time.

We are ready now to recognise the manner in which the great tradition bequeathed by our Elizabethan drama was slain summarily by the Puritans of 1642 and was kept moribund throughout the next two centuries and a half. If Sheridan and Goldsmith had not been endowed by nature with the inspired dauntlessness of Irishmen, they would hardly have dared to startle the English theatre with those masterpieces of satiric comedy with which they momentarily enlivened it in the closing years of the eighteenth century.

A second cause which impeded the composition of a worthy English drama between the period of *The School for Scandal* and the period of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* was the utterly mistaken application of the overpowering influence



of Shakespeare. Shakespeare was first exploited as the supreme dramatic genius of all time at that epoch in the history of English literature which is generally labelled as the Romantic Revival. This epoch occurred contemporaneously with that violent upheaval which resulted ultimately in the triumph of democracy in France; and it is now regarded as a period of thought whose current judgments, though generally sound in principle, were often tainted by a faulty exaggeration of details.

At the very outset of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare (who enjoyed at that particular moment the great advantage of appearing as a newly re-discovered poet) was lauded, by such persuasive critics as Coleridge and Lamb, as the greatest dramatist who had ever lived at any time. An illogical deduction from this plausible assumption resulted, at the moment, in the devastating inference that the only proper way to write a worthy drama must be to write a careful imitation of the plays of Shakespeare.

In consequence of this unreasonable corollary, a preponderant majority of the greatest English poets of the nineteenth century were seduced to write, not plays, but manifest anachronisms. These idealistic artists were persuaded all too easily—in the language of Charles Lamb—to "write for antiquity," instead of setting out to write for the instant recognition and applause of a contemporary generation.

The many noble English poets who deliberately imitated Shakespeare throughout the first three quarters of the nineteenth century were merely trying to make plays which might be fitted to a theatre that had been legislated out of existence so long before as 1642. They had not yet been apprised of that essential principle of contemporary criticism which asserts and assumes an undeniable relation between the drama and the theatre of any given period. According to this axiom of modern criticism, the most ambitious playwright is enjoined to formulate his efforts in accordance with those principles of structure—whatever they may be—which seem to satisfy most easily the theatre-going pub-

lic of his own period and his own locality. It is never really possible to plan a great play for a type of theatre that has been obsolete for two centuries; and, when more than a dozen of our greatest poets of the nineteenth century attempted to write plays for the Globe Theatre on the Bankside, they were renouncing an immediate opportunity to "hold the mirror up to nature," for the sake of imitating slavishly a lofty model that, for many years, had been outworn.

A third, and cognate, cause of the dearth of English drama throughout the first nine decades of the nineteenth century was the persistence of a great galaxy of great actors, from the period of the Kembles and Kean, through the period of Macready, to the period of Irving. Throughout his recent book on *The Foundations of A National Drama,* Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has insisted on the prime importance of dispelling the confusion between the drama and the theatre which persists in the popular mind. The drama is an art of authorship; and the theatre entertains the public by the exhibition of many other matters than the art of authorship. Mr. Jones has pointed out that the theatre has often flourished in periods when the drama was dead. A great actor ceases to be a friend to the drama, and becomes instead a foe, when he persuades the public that his own performance is more important than the play in which he happens to appear. Half a century ago, the public—both in England and in the United States—went to the theatre to watch the work of certain famous actors: it is only since the advent of Pinero that they have been persuaded to go to the theatre to watch the work of certain famous playwrights. The names of Shaw and Barrie now draw people to the box-office as they used to be drawn by the names of Booth and Irving.

The great actors of the nineteenth century achieved their reputations in the noted characters of Shakespeare; and, when they condescended to commission the writing of new plays, they naturally asked to be provided with parts that should permit them to appear in the trappings and the suits



of Shakespeare. By this procedure, many authors of undeniable dramatic talent, such as Sheridan Knowles and Bulwer-Lytton and Tom Taylor, were persuaded to write romantic fustian in pedestrian blank verse, instead of taking their material from contemporary life. The English drama fell on evil days, because of its neglect of Hamlet's caution, —"to hold, as 't were, the mirror up to nature," and "to show . . . the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

The fourth cause which impeded and postponed the initiation of a modern English drama was the lack, until late in the nineteenth century, of an adequate law of international copyright. A great new drama was launched in France in 1830 by Victor Hugo and Alexander Dumas *père;* and this drama was soon developed to proportions of international importance by the clever and facile Eugène Scribe and his more weighty and more serious successors, Alexandre Dumas *fils* and Emile Augier. In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was still possible for an English manager to purloin a noted play by any of these famous authors and to produce it without paying any royalty. The clever plays of Scribe lent themselves most easily to "adaptation"; and a British or an American manager could produce a new Scribe play without assuming any financial obligation except the paying of a few pounds or a few dollars to some hack writer for the easy work of translating the dialogue and inventing English names for the various characters. It was cheaper to steal a French play than to pay royalties to an English dramatist. In consequence of this condition, many men of promising dramatic talent,—like Charles Reade, for example,—were driven out of the theatre and forced, in contravention of their natural desires, to take up the task of writing novels in order to earn their living.

The statement that Sir Arthur Pinero and Mr. Henry Arthur Jones—the two important pioneers of the modern English drama—were utterly devoid of predecessors should be qualified, perhaps, with a single exception. Pinero once

said to me, in conversation, "If ever you write a history of our modern English drama, be fair to Tom Robertson. If it hadn't been for Robertson, I should never have been able to do what I have done; and that applies also to the other fellows." Thomas William Robertson (1829-1871) conceived, in 1865, the curious and unconventional idea that it might be interesting to make a play that looked like life itself and that invited from the public the response of recognition. Robertson was the first English dramatist since Richard Brinsley Sheridan—who had retired from the theatre almost a full century before—to attempt the task of "holding the mirror up to nature." He wrote several successful plays, which made a fortune on the stage and pointed out the new path which Pinero was to follow. But Robertson's attempts to mirror life are now regarded as conventional, theatrical, and artificial. He was too confirmed a sentimentalist to succeed in the creation of a genuinely realistic drama. His plays are dead to-day, because of his admitted unreality; but his manifest ambition "to show the very age and body of the time his form and pressure" is still marching on, and informs the work not only of such immediate successors as Pinero and Mr. Jones but also of such comparatively distant heirs as Mr. Galsworthy and Mr. Barker. Under the fictitious name of Tom Wrench, Pinero drew a careful portrait of Tom Robertson in his reminiscent comedy entitled *Trelawney of the "Wells."* This apparently fantastic composition is the only one among the forty-six plays that have thus far been written and produced by Pinero in which the characters were drawn directly from actual people whom the author had observed in life. In the course of that same conversation which is emphasised in my memory by Pinero's injunction to "be fair to Tom Robertson," the author told me that *Trelawney of the "Wells"* was his sole experiment in autobiography. It depicted accurately many people whom he actually knew at the period of his apprenticeship in the wonder-world of the English theatre.



III

The apprenticeship of Arthur Wing Pinero—though promising from the outset, and more and more successful with the passing of the years—was long and arduous. There is a sound historical tradition in the theatre that a dramatic author must have many plays "killed under him" before he can hope to be promoted to a position of command. *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*—which revolutionised the English theatre and established in a single night the undeniable existence of a modern English drama—was the twenty-eighth, in order, of its author's acted plays. In the opinion of the present critic, this play is the first indubitable masterpiece in the dramaturgy of Pinero; and—though it has been followed by several other masterpieces which either rival or surpass it—our apprentice-playwrights of the present moment may be stimulated in their efforts by a recognition of the fact that Pinero succeeded in asserting his absolute supremacy of the English-speaking theatre only at his twenty-eighth attempt. An artist who has been denied, by certain accidents of history, the advantage of being ushered into prominence by established predecessors is forced to become, throughout the period of his apprenticeship, a sort of predecessor to himself. Before Pinero dreamed of undertaking that great task which now, because of its accomplishment, is regarded as the crown of his career, he had already won his way, by hard labour and incessant practice, to a rank of leadership among contemporary English playwrights. He had proved his ability to play the game of the past before he undertook the great adventure of inventing the new game of the present and the future. This innovator in the English theatre was not, by any means, a neophyte. He had built up, by patient labour, an impressive fundament of previous experience, which stood as a solid backing behind him.

IV

Arthur Wing Pinero was born in London in 1855. The ancestry of this acknowledged leader of all living English playwrights is curiously interesting. In race, he is part Jewish and part Gentile; and in blood, he is part Latin and part Anglo-Saxon. His name, of course, is Portuguese; and visitors to Lisbon will notice that this name—spelled, more amply, as Pinheiro—appears frequently in street-signs that announce the presence of mercantile establishments of the better sort. The grandfather of the playwright was naturalised as a British subject, and served as a teller of the Exchequer. His father, Daniel Pinero, was a practicing solicitor in London. Arthur Wing Pinero was educated for the law, but renounced this avocation at the age of nineteen, when he resolved to try his fortune on the stage.

Despite the fact that Pinero elected to begin his active life in the playhouse, it should be remembered always that he was both well-educated and well-born. His critical, sardonic interest in the vulgar "climbing" of the middle class has been motivated partly by the fact that, from his birth, he was accustomed to the usages of aristocracy; whereas the predilection of so different a dramatist as Mr. Henry Arthur Jones for a sort of moralising satire on the foibles of the aristocracy was motivated, for the most part, by the fact that Mr. Jones was born a farmer's son and began his active life as a commercial traveller. Mr. Jones attacks the aristocracy from the point of view of a militant outsider; but Pinero attacks the middle class from the point of view of a superior observer who does not need to care about the matter any more than he appears to care.

Pinero began his chosen career as an actor in 1874, when he played small parts in Edinburgh with Mr. and Mrs. Wyndham, at a salary of one pound a week. The next year, he was employed in Liverpool; and, in 1876, he came to London, to act at the Globe Theatre. Later in the same



season, he enjoyed the great advantage of being engaged by Henry Irving; and he served at the Lyceum Theatre for five successive years in the capacity of an "utility man." This experience convinced Pinero that he was not cut out by nature to be a notable actor; but it also furnished him with that necessary knowledge of the craftsmanship of acting which has made him one of the most remarkable stage-directors of modern times. In this particular, the apprenticeship of Pinero ran parallel with the apprenticeship of Shakespeare; for both men began as inefficient performers and subsequently succeeded in exalting themselves to the rank of efficient stage-directors. After his initial successes as a playwright, Pinero judiciously abandoned the secondary and interpretative art of acting; but his early years of actual experience in treading the boards have stood him in good stead as a basis for the subsequent development of his almost uncanny talent for directing the interpretative efforts of abler actors than himself.

I have never been so fortunate as to attend the rehearsals of a Pinero play; but I have derived a consciousness of the proceedings from many conversations with Pinero's actors and also from a conversation with the author himself. It appears that, after he has written a new play, he prints it privately at the Chiswick Press and hands a printed copy to every actor in the company, with the emphasised injunction to study not only the text of his particular part but also the text of the entire composition. In the course of the rehearsals, Pinero dictates every gesture and every intonation which he desires by reason of the pre-conception of his pattern. He appears quite frankly at rehearsals as the master—and not the servant—of his actors: and, in consequence, his actors respect him and enjoy the privilege of working for him. Pinero once said to me that if he should suddenly die, after writing a new play and printing it—complete in dialogue and stage-directions—at the Chiswick Press, he would die with his current work half-done; since the labour of conducting the rehearsals of a play was by no means less

important to the achievement of the project than the labour of composing the text.

V

As a matter of record, it may be stated that Pinero's first play—a one-act piece entitled *Two Hundred A Year*—was produced at the Globe Theatre on October 6th, 1877, and that three of his next four efforts were accepted by Henry Irving and produced—as curtain-raisers—at the Lyceum Theatre. Irving paid the young actor-author £50 for *Daisy's Escape,* and prophesied after the first performance that, if he went on as he had begun, he would be certain to achieve a good position as a dramatist. Irving himself, however, never acted any part in any play of Pinero's,—not even at that later period when Pinero had established himself as a maker of masterpieces. In this connection, it may not be impertinent to state that once, when Mr. Henry Arthur Jones—the able colleague of Pinero in the heroic task of creating out of nothing our modern English drama—had told me that his most ambitious work, entitled *Michael and His Lost Angel,* had been initially designed for Henry Irving and Ellen Terry, and I had asked him to explain Sir Henry's reason for neglecting to produce the play, the author pithily replied that "Irving did not want to have a dramatist around his theatre."

A complete record of the first performances of Pinero's early plays is tabulated in the appendix to the present volume. There is nothing to be said about them except that they were sufficiently successful to encourage the author to renounce his career as an actor and to devote his entire attention to the task of making plays. Some critics have discerned a promise of decided talent in *The Money Spinner,* which, first produced in Manchester on November 5th, 1880, was subsequently shown in London, at the St. James's Theatre, on January 8th, 1881. I must admit an inability to share this view. Though one or two of the climactic pas-



sages are theatrically effective, the general conduct of the piece is crude. The scene is set in France; and the text reads like a mere pedestrian imitation of the "commercial" French drama that was current at the time. The first play by Pinero which appeals to me at all is *The Squire*—his eighth effort—which was produced at the St. James's Theatre on December 29th, 1881, with Mr. and Mrs. Kendal in the cast. This play begins quite wonderfully, with a first act that is sound in structure and rich in characterisation; but the climax is disappointing and the last act is conventional and dull. *The Squire* was not, by any means, a satisfying work of art, but it offered a clear promise of greater works to come; and Mr. William Archer was amply justified in describing Pinero at the time as "a thoughtful and conscientious writer with artistic aims, if not yet with full command of his artistic means," and in pointing out "sufficient promise to warrant a hope that we have in this author a playwright of genuine talent, whose more mature work will take a prominent and honourable place upon our stage in coming years."

Such plays as *The Squire,* and *The Weaker Sex*—which, though not produced till 1889, was written five years earlier—appeared to indicate a clear ambition on the part of this new author to establish himself as an exponent of that serious, and almost tragic, type of play which has been labelled definitively by the French with the two words, *drame moderne.* But, as matters actually happened, the first impressive triumphs of Pinero were achieved in the quite different domain of farce. He had already written two traditional but quite unusually clever farces for Edward Terry—*The Rocket,* first produced in 1883, and *In Chancery,* first produced in 1884—when he received an appeal from Arthur Cecil and John Clayton—joint-managers of the Court Theatre, in Sloane Square—to arrest the falling fortunes of their theatre by the immediate preparation of a farce that should be popular. Pinero responded promptly with *The Magistrate,* which—first produced on March 21st, 1885—turned

out to be one of the most successful farces of modern times.

In *The Magistrate,* Pinero established a new standard, by substituting the farce of character for the old conventional farce of situation. He invented a new type of drama, whose purpose was to exhibit "possible people doing improbable things" and to emphasise the comic incongruity between a plot which was admitted to be artificial and fantastic and a set of characters drawn sedulously with the uttermost respect for all observable details of actuality. He invented a formula for populating an impossible plot with characters not only possible but probable.

The great success of *The Magistrate*—a play, which, despite the lapse of more than thirty years, still holds the stage throughout the English-speaking world—led directly to the composition of three other notable farces for the Court Theatre,—namely, *The Schoolmistress* (1886), *Dandy Dick* (1887), and *The Cabinet Minister* (1890).

Meanwhile, however, Pinero was developing a secondary vein of sentiment, as an ultimate result of the early influence of Robertson. In *Sweet Lavender* (1888), and again in *Lady Bountiful* (1891), he sedulously followed the formula of Robertson, and reproduced the obvious appearances of nature behind a subtly hung and almost indiscernible "front-drop" of misty sentiment. *Lady Bountiful*—a novelistic sort of drama which was hampered by a "happy ending" not sufficiently foreshadowed—was never popular upon the stage; but *Sweet Lavender* was precisely suited to the taste of the contemporary public. It would take a registered accountant many hours to check up the total number of times that *Sweet Lavender* was acted by the late Edward Terry, who created the part of the bibulous and amiable Richard Phenyl; and the piece has been performed by other companies than Mr. Terry's, hundreds and hundreds of times, all around the rolling world. *Sweet Lavender* is a well-made play, according to the conventions that were current in 1888; but the main reason which has prompted the present commentator to emphasise the vast success of so wishy-washy a composition



is a desire to indicate a manifest temptation which must have assailed the author to reassemble the same popular ingredients in his subsequent endeavours.

Despite the great success of farces like *The Magistrate* and sentimental fabrics like *Sweet Lavender,* Pinero persisted, throughout the period of his thirties, in a clear attempt to write a *drame moderne. The Hobby Horse*—produced in 1886—exhibited a gallery of seriously studied characters, grouped centrifugally in relation to an important theme. The belated production of *The Weaker Sex* in 1889 indicated also a persistent desire to employ the theatre as a medium for adult thought. *The Times*—produced in 1891—pointed forward to that new type of serious satiric comedy which has been developed, in later years, by Mr. Bernard Shaw. But it was in *The Profligate*—which was first produced in London at the Garrick Theatre on April 24th, 1889—that Pinero finally gave definite promise of the great career that lay before him.

The Profligate revealed an honest and sincere attempt to write a *drame moderne.* The thesis of this play—that the past sins of a profligate will be visited upon his future—was fundamentally sound. Dunstan Renshaw had dallied with many light adventures among women before he met the virginal person who persuaded him completely to fall in love. His married life is quite idyllically happy, until a shattered woman from the wreckage of his past turns up to interrupt his present sense of security. In the original version of *The Profligate,* Dunstan Renshaw committed suicide and died; but the author was persuaded by John Hare to substitute a fabricated "happy ending," in order to improve the prospects of the play in London.

The Profligate—like *Sweet Lavender, The Hobby Horse,* and *The Magistrate*—was written in conformity with those now obsolete conventions of the stage which permitted an unimpeded use of the soliloquy and the aside. Such plays are now summarily discarded as "old-fashioned"; but, in reading them to-day, it should always be remembered that

it was Pinero himself who made them seem "old-fashioned" when he wrote *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* without recourse to such labour-saving expedients as the soliloquy and the aside, which had been employed in the English theatre for hundreds of years. In the midst of a period of progress, Pinero dared—at the apparent height of his career—to render his own early efforts "obsolete" by decreeing and establishing a new technique which, at the moment, was unprecedented.

VI

Before the conclusion of the decade of the eighteen-eighties, Pinero had earned a large fortune from the royalties of such successful pieces as *The Magistrate* and *Sweet Lavender;* and he had earned, as well, an almost undisputed title to the leadership of the contemporary English drama. Pinero once said to me, in a confidential moment,—"My fortune and my fame were made by *The Magistrate* and *Sweet Lavender*. After that, there was nothing left for me to do but to try to write great plays, regardless of the predilections of the public."

Pinero, at the outset of the eighteen-nineties, might humanly have been excused if he had elected to rest upon his oars and to repeat the formulas successfully projected in his former plays. Instead, he decided to embark upon a new and utterly unprecedented undertaking. He saw that a serious drama had been established, for more than half a century, in France; and his mind refused to accept any of the current excuses which had been formulated to discourage the establishment of a serious drama on the English-speaking stage.

The mighty influence of Ibsen was first impressed upon the current English theatre in 1891, when *Ghosts* was exhibited in London under the auspices of the Independent Theatre Society. By the overpowering incentive of this brooding giant of the north, Pinero was persuaded to under-



take a thorough study of the works of many other recent European dramatists,—particularly, Alexandre Dumas *fils*. He taught himself the new technique, and absorbed the "high seriousness" of his continental mentors.

He made up his mind that a really earnest English play —conceived in accordance with the social intention of Ibsen and executed in conformity with the developed technique of Dumas *fils*—would stand a chance of achieving at least an honourable *succès d'estime* in the current English theatre. In consequence of this idealistic reading of the indications of the times, Pinero undertook and wrote *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* in 1892.

Pinero himself has told me that, when he had finished *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*, he hoped, at the most, for a couple of matinée performances, in conformity with the precedent established previously by Ibsen's *Ghosts*. Mr. Alexander (now Sir George) agreed with this opinion, and arranged to produce the piece for a limited series of special matinées. But, by reason of the unexpected failure of a light comedy by R. C. Carton, Mr. Alexander was required to erect the proposed production into the perilous status of an evening bill. During the period of rehearsals, it was decided that the experienced and very skilful actress who was cast for Paula Tanqueray was not endowed by nature to depict the physical fascination of the heroine, and an unknown actress from the provinces was suddenly substituted by Alexander and Pinero because of her personal beauty. This unknown actress from the provinces was Mrs. Patrick Campbell. The play immediately made her famous; and to this day the part of Paula remains the most popular part in Mrs. Campbell's repertory.

VII

The unexpected popular acclaim which was accorded to *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* convinced Pinero that he was intended by destiny to be a serious dramatist; and, at the

age of thirty-eight, he deliberately turned his back upon his past successes and embarked upon a new career which he has continued ever since with undisrupted credit. On the twenty-eighth occasion of his appearance before the English public as a playwright, he decreed the obsolescence of his previous technique and admitted that his former plays had not attained the height of his intention. By this brave action, he acknowledged that he owed a debt—not only to the theatre-going public but to himself as well—by reason of those payments in both fame and fortune which had already, so to speak, been delivered to him in advance.

It does not seem, by any means, superfluous to stress the fact that such monumental dramas as *Mid-Channel* and *The Thunderbolt*—which have made comparatively little money in the theatre—have been written, in later years, to liquidate a debt of honour to a public that had paid a great deal of money for the privilege of seeing such comparatively unimportant entertainments as *Sweet Lavender* and *The Magistrate*. It would have been easy enough for Pinero, in 1893, to retain his reputation and to multiply his fortune by the simple expedient of continuing to give the public what the public seemed to want. Instead, he chose to give the public something greater—regardless of whether or not the public should realise at once, or indeed for many years, that it really wanted a new drama because it really needed it.

This heroical decision of Pinero's, at the age of thirty-eight, is comparable with that other and more famous decision which was made by Henrik Ibsen, at the age of forty-nine, to renounce the fame and fortune that had previously been conceded to him as a romantic and poetic playwright and to initiate an entirely new career as a writer of prosaic and realistic dramas. Ibsen—so to speak—began life for a second time in 1877, when he wrote his *Pillars of Society;* and became famous for a second time, at the age of fifty-one, when he produced *A Doll's House,* in 1879. Pinero, also, is a man of two careers; and the second period of his activity is immeasurably greater than the first.



The serious and solid plays which are to be included in the present LIBRARY EDITION have all been written since 1892. They represent, in the opinion of the editor, the best that has been thought and said by the leading living master of our English-speaking drama. Four of them, at least—*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, Iris, The Thunderbolt, Mid-Channel*—remain as yet unrivalled by any other of the notable practitioners of that modern English drama which was created, by Pinero himself, a quarter of a century ago. Of these important plays, it is not necessary to speak further in the present context. Each of them will speak for itself; and each play, when assigned to its chronological location in the present LIBRARY EDITION, will be provided with a Critical Preface by the editor.

Since 1892, Pinero has also written several plays in a lighter mood inherited from that pre-established period of the eighteen-eighties when he was delighting and pleasing the public with farces and sentimental comedies. In this respect, his procedure has paralleled the precedent of Molière, who, after producing so serious a comedy in verse as *Le Misanthrope,* reverted to an earlier and an easier manner and launched a simple farce in prose,—*Le Médecin Malgré Lui.* Pinero, in his later period as a standard-bearer of the *drame moderne,* has frequently composed such comparatively unimportant plays as *The Princess and The Butterfly* and *A Wife Without a Smile,* with an absolutely disingenuous intention of entertaining his own mind with a sheer vacation from more serious pursuits. Even so delectable a product as *The Amazons,* which was first produced two months before *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* was actually written immediately after the conclusion of the more ambitious drama.

To illustrate this minor but illuminative point, I may be permitted to record a conversation which took place in 1910, shortly subsequent to the successive productions of *The Thunderbolt* and *Mid-Channel.* Pinero, at that moment, was at work on a new play; and I ventured to ask him what

the new play was about. His reply was absolutely frank. "It's not about anything," he said. "It's rather a silly sort of play,—a farce with no subject-matter whatsoever. You won't like it when you see it. But—after writing two distressing plays like *Mid-Channel* and *The Thunderbolt*—I had to amuse myself with the mere trickery of making something out of nothing. That's the only way I know to take a rest." The piece in question was *Preserving Mr. Panmure,*—an entertaining fabric which revealed the application of a masterly technique to material that was ephemeral.

VIII

The fact has been already mentioned that Pinero was, in part, encouraged to compose *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* by the exhibition of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in London in 1891; but —despite his due respect for the great Norwegian master— Pinero has never been persuaded to adopt the technical formula which Ibsen endeavoured to impose, by the precept of example, upon the modern drama. When Pinero launched *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* he asserted an opinion that the retrospective (or analytic) method of construction is less effective in the theatre than the forward-looking (or synthetic) method.

Pinero, presumably, was influenced by Ibsen in the lofty purpose of his later plays. He absorbed from the example of the meditative giant of the north an intention to discuss those personal problems which arise, in the lives of contemporary people, in reference to that drastic and inescapable machinery of organised society which is forever whirring in the background. He adopted from the most illustrious of his immediate predecessors the subject-matter of the Modern Social Drama.

But Pinero discarded—at the very outset of his new career—the technical pattern of Ibsen. He chose, instead, to adopt from Alexandre Dumas *fils* the straight-forward for-



mula which Dumas had inherited from Eugène Scribe—with many incidental betterings of the original instruction. In his technical procedure, Pinero may be said to carry on the tradition of "the well-made play" (*"la pièce bien faite"*),—as a sort of grandson of Scribe, through the intermediary generation of Alexandre Dumas *fils*.

This formula has been denounced—in very recent years—by critics of that same anarchic type as those who sneer at Tennyson for the reason that he wrote verse with the uttermost professional adroitness and with reverent respect for those technical traditions which were established by his noblest predecessors. In the mouths of such critics, the very phrase—"a well-made play"—is bandied forth as a sort of slogan of reproach. They contend that the drama should be undramatic and that the theatre should be untheatrical. To be consistent, they should amplify their programme and insist that all art should be inartistic.

Pinero is—first and foremost—a master of technique. He believes that art should be artistic, that the drama should be dramatic, and that the theatre should be theatrical. He has stated publicly that the proper function of what he calls "theatrical talent" is to "give rise, within the limits of an ordinary theatrical representation, to the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great function of the theatre."

Pinero understands the theatre as a place for exhibiting plays upon the stage:—that is to say, a place for "holding the mirror up to nature" and for "showing the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." He does not understand the theatre as a platform for the eloquent delivery of personal opinions or as a medium for the propagation of momentary projects in the extra-theatrical domain of social service. Within the circle of his own activities, he is an artist for the sake of art. His dramas are as utterly objective as the short-stories of Guy de Maupassant. Like Maupassant, he leaves his characters alone: he creates them—full-grown from his forehead—and permits them to ex-

press themselves without the adventitious interference of any subsequent suggestion decreed—*ex cathedra*—from the author's seat upon Olympus.

Because Pinero, in his best plays, is an artist for the sake of art, he has been misunderstood by many critics who, in recent years, have allowed themselves to be persuaded that a play should be an essay and that a dramatist should use the theatre as a pulpit instead of accepting it as a pedestal for "holding the mirror up to nature." Pinero does not talk about life: he *exhibits* life, and leaves the talking to individual spectators. His method is not abstract, but concrete.

The importance of Pinero's "message" is sometimes questioned by contemporary critics. "And what"—it might, in justice, be inquired—"was the 'message' of Velasquez?" What further mission is demanded of an artist than to express concretely, through the terms of an adequate technique, a truthful vision of the passing of the show-parade of life? Must he also be a commentator on his subject-matter?—must he also be a critic of his own creation?—must he also appear before the public as a professional expounder of his own achievements as an artist?

Pinero is—as has been stated—an artist for the sake of art. With the example of Ibsen hanging high before him, he declined to undertake the abstract thesis-drama, and insisted on continuing the concrete portraiture of character. Ibsen's plays, for the most part, were written to support a thesis; but Pinero's plays, for the most part, have been written merely to reveal the natural evolutions of certain characters so utterly created that even their own author lacked authority to interfere with the dictates of their destiny.

As a practical exponent of modern dramaturgic craftsmanship, Pinero is even more adroit than Ibsen. His traditional, synthetic formula has overcome in practice the analytic, revolutionary pattern that was attempted by the great Norwegian in *Ghosts*. Pinero has also proved himself superior to Ibsen in the conduct of the time-scheme of his plays. He has never capitulated to the sort of error which



conquered Ibsen in the final act of *Hedda Gabler,* when the author allowed himself to falsify an apparently inevitable outcome, in a vain endeavour to complete the full-compass of the action within a pre-determined temporal limit.

Pinero is—without question—the ablest dramaturgic craftsman in the current theatre of the world. The very critics who question the importance of his "message" admit, without argument, the supremacy of his technique. In consequence, Pinero is "the playwright's playwright,"—just as Edmund Spenser is "the poet's poet." He is—to quote a famous phrase of Dante's—"the master of those who know" the difficulties of the craft of making plays.

Professor Brander Matthews has told us that the art of making plays, like the art of making clocks, has improved throughout the centuries; and he has called our attention to the fact that a journeyman-labourer in Waterbury, at the present time, can make with ease a clock that runs more orderly than an ancient Swiss time-piece that was constructed, with infinite pains, by some mechanical genius of the middle ages. Pinero—by virtue of the very fact that he is the leading dramaturgic craftsman of this present period—is, by that token, the ablest architect of plays who ever lived. No play, in the entire history of the drama, has at any time surpassed, in utter technical efficiency, *The Thunderbolt,* or *Iris,* or *Mid-Channel,* or *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray.* Many other plays have been nobler in intention (for even a twentieth-century critic cannot, by any possibility, forbear a genuflection to such giants as Euripides and Shakespeare); but no plays have ever, at any time, been "better-made."

By virtue of this fact, Pinero appears as the most important teacher of the apprentice-playwrights of the present hour. Young artists who are seeking the royal road to any craft should follow in the foot-steps of those nearest predecessors who have been already recognised as masters of technique. Pinero is the great exponent and the great preceptor of contemporary dramaturgy, even as Donatello was the great teacher of the craft of sculpture when the Renaissance was

at its height in Italy. Even to revolt against the standards of Pinero, it is necessary that a neophyte should master them before attempting to renounce them. He is—as even his most carping critics are accustomed to admit without discussion—the superlative, supreme technician in the entire field of the contemporary drama.

IX

The private life of Arthur Wing Pinero has been, quite literally, private. Pinero has always avoided the lime-light for himself and reserved it for his plays. Everybody knows that he was knighted, "for his services," in 1909, and that he was the first playwright in the history of English literature who received this royal honour by virtue merely of the merit of his writings for the stage. The facts are also generally known that he is married and that he has no children.

In a very recent letter to myself, Pinero said, "There will be some difficulty about 'biography,' because I have never troubled myself to supply particulars of my early life to any writer. There is, however, a book which professes to deal with me, and this may be of some help to you. I have never felt sufficient interest in the subject to read it myself, and I haven't a copy of it; but my secretary will do her best to obtain one."

I have decided to print this passage, because of its indication of the modesty of the man, and because also of its indication of that attitude of utter disassociation which he feels in respect to his own work and his own reputation. No personage was ever more averse to advertisement, and no artist of the theatre has ever been more careless of his fame. His attitude might be formulated justly in some such phrases as the following:—"Here are my plays: and the public may like them or not, as matters fall. As for myself,—the public cannot possibly be interested in me." But the commentator should immediately emphasise the fact that this attitude is by no means one of pride but one of genuine humility.



Pinero is afflicted with such a horror of the lime-light that he never appears at the first performance of any of his plays, and never attends a public repetition of any of his works if he can possibly avoid it. Until the final moment of the final dress-rehearsal, he collaborates with his actors as a fellow-craftsman; but thereafter he deserts the play-house, and turns his attention to the next play that is hovering already in his mind. When his work is done, he quits the theatre; he never remains to listen to the plaudits of applause.

Because of this personal peculiarity, Pinero has failed to witness some of the most notable performances of many of his most remarkable characters. I remember, in particular, the pleasure with which I once expatiated, in a conversation with Pinero, upon the superlative performance of the part of the Duke of St. Olpherts, in *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith,* which had been rendered by Mr. George Arliss; and I remember also the eager interest of the author in innumerable technical details, by reason of the fact that he had never happened to direct the work of Mr. Arliss in this part, which had been "created," in the first production, by Sir John Hare.

It was only with the greatest difficulty that Pinero was persuaded to attend a performance of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* in the Italian language, with the part of Paula enacted by no less an artist than Eleanora Duse. Concerning this performance, I remember that the author said to me: —"Duse is, beyond question, the finest and the subtlest actress of our time; but, as Paula, she wasn't English enough, —if you see what I mean."

Pinero travelled to New York in the middle of the eighteen-eighties, in order to direct the rehearsals of *The Magistrate* at Daly's Theatre; but he has never since crossed the ocean to visit the United States. In 1910, I urged him to cross the ferry for a second time. At that moment, *Mid-Channel* and *The Thunderbolt* were current on the American stage. "I'd like to see America," Pinero said, "but I'm

afraid to risk it. As soon as I got over, Mr. Frohman might request me to sit in a box at the performance of one of my plays."

X

The reticence of Pinero in regard to the details of his personal and private life shall be dutifully reverenced by the present commentator. But, in two respects, the public has a right to be informed. Something must be said in explanation of his habits in dramatic composition; and a few words must also be delivered in description of the author's personality.

Pinero may be said to live two lives,—his life between plays, and his life within the jurisdiction of a new play that has captured his attention. Between plays, he is extremely sociable. He appears at the Garrick Club, and delights in conversation with his many friends. But so soon as a new play is engendered, he retires summarily from the actual society of London, to bury himself in the country—at a secluded seat whose name it is not necessary to disclose—for the purpose of associating solely with those imaginary people who are pre-destined to "strut their hour on the stage" when his next play shall be ready for disclosure.

According to the habit of Pinero, the starting-point of any play is not a thesis, nor a situation, but a visioning of certain characters. He imagines a few people who invite him to investigate them. Thereupon, he retires from the normal intercourse of actual society, and disappears for three or four months, which are devoted solely—as he himself describes the process—to the task of "getting acquainted" with these imaginary people. Pinero once said to me, in conversation,—"When they talk, I listen to them; when they act, I watch them; when they wait, I have to wait for them. Of course, if they bestir themselves at dinner time, I have no dinner."

After the three or four months that have been devoted



to the preliminary process of "getting acquainted" with his characters, Pinero assembles them and determines what they would logically do when brought into juxtaposition. Next, he builds the action,—or constructs, cold-bloodedly, a technical *scenario* of the entire play. When this process is completed, he permits himself a brief vacation. Thereafter, he writes the dialogue and rushes forward to his final task of directing the rehearsals.

Pinero—as known to his acquaintances—must be reckoned and recorded as two men,—a genial and affable companion between plays, and a stern recluse so soon as a new play has been conceived. As a normal man, he loves the common usages of intercourse; but, as a creative artist, he secludes himself from life with an almost monastic isolation.

XI

Readers of the masterpieces of Pinero will demand some description of the author, "in his habit as he lives." That such a picture may be made as intimate as possible, the editor of these volumes may perhaps be excused for venturing to speak with utter frankness.

In 1910, the present writer—who was born and brought up in New York—transferred, for many weeks, his residence to London, in order to assemble the materials for a book entitled *On The Trail of Stevenson* under the immediate and admonitory eyes of Sir Sidney Colvin and Mr. Edmund Gosse. At that moment, Mr. Daniel Frohman—recognising my keen interest in the dramaturgy of Pinero—wrote a letter to the famous playwright to inform him of my temporary transmigration overseas.

Shortly after my arrival in London, I received a note from Sir Arthur inviting me to visit him at a stated hour. Because of my enormous admiration for his work, I felt as my friend, Mr. William Archer, must have felt when he was first invited to meet Henrik Ibsen in the rooms of the

Scandinavian Club in Rome. I drove to Harley Street with trepidation, because of the great eminence of the man who was condescending to receive me.

I emphasise this trepidation in order to underscore the unforeseen effect of the experience which welcomed me and overwhelmed me. After three minutes of conversation with Sir Arthur, I realised—with a sense of perfect ease—that we had known each other all our lives, and had roomed together in both school and college. I am able now to calculate that, at the moment, I was only twenty-eight years old and that Sir Arthur was already fifty-five; but the simple truth of the matter seemed to be that we were of the same age and that we had always known each other on the level of equality.

I have never met a famous man who was so rapidly and readily companionable. In a very few moments, I found myself audaciously arguing against him in respect to certain technical problems that had been brought forth in his famous plays. To all such arguments, he replied with a smiling but clear-sighted courtesy, as if he liked to act the part of interlocutor, if only from a sense of fun. I must have made an exhibition of myself at this first meeting: it is an American habit, I suppose: but it was, in part, Sir Arthur's fault, for leading me on without allowing me to suspect that he was leading me on.

Pinero is absolutely radiant. There is no other adjective to describe the immediate impression of his personality. To quote a noble phrase from the New Testament,—"a virtue goes out of him." His very presence is so utterly informed with life that you say of him—as Lincoln said of Whitman,—"There goes a man!"

Pinero is short, and rather stout, and habitually dapper in appearance. His present figure is, almost precisely, Napoleonic. He is endowed not only with the stature and the build of the legendary Little Corporal, but also with Napoleon's quick action of the feet and nimble movements of the hands. Although he is a comparatively little man, as weight and stature are reckoned up in war-time, he seems astound-



ingly alive; and every attitude and every gesture afford an intimation of authority.

His face is wonderful to look upon. The clear-cut profile reveals his Jewish origin. His eyes are very black—or seem to be, because they are so sparkling—and they are overshadowed deeply by the bushiest and brownest eyebrows I have ever seen. Above these eyebrows—which constitute the deepest shadow of his face—the forehead slopes upward over a high dome which is completely bald. This bald head was fringed with dark-brown hair, until the fringing began reluctantly to turn to grey. But the things to be remembered are the sparkling eyes, the thick and bushy eyebrows, the aquiline profile, and the great bald dome above them.

The quickness of Pinero's conversation is answerable to his almost Latin eagerness in gesture; and the smartness of his dress is answerable to his sprightly eagerness in conversation. A typical "get-up" of Sir Arthur's is a conventional morning-coat, with a flower in the button-hole, checked trousers, and a grey bowler-hat with a black band. In this "get-up," he endeavours assiduously to be inconspicuous.

On one occasion Sir Arthur suggested that we should take luncheon the next day at some quiet, little restaurant where "nobody would know us." He meant—of course—where nobody would know him. I drove up, at the appointed hour, before a place in Piccadilly, and I found Sir Arthur waiting for me on the sidewalk. He explained —before luncheon—that he had to go down to the country by the three o'clock train, in order to resume his work on the play which, at that moment, was in progress. At half past two, I reminded him of this; and he remarked that there was another train which was scheduled to leave at four. At half past three, I reminded him again; and he retorted—very eagerly and very youthfully—that there was still a later train at five. At half past four, I bundled him into a cab and drove him to the station. "Go away and write it," I said to this great man who seemed

so very young, so utterly my equal, and so totally my friend.

Does this personal glimpse afford the reader any inkling of the radiant, contagious personality of that apparently aloof and apparently "unsympathetic" dramatist who wrote *Mid-Channel* and *The Thunderbolt?* Pinero himself is more instantly and tinglingly alive than any of his plays. His very presence is electrical; and to talk with him for half an hour is to add an inch to one's stature, or a month to one's allotment in the dull, prosaic records of the life of man.

CLAYTON HAMILTON.





THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY



CRITICAL PREFACE *

The superlative merits of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* as a technical achievement and a typical example of contemporary craftsmanship have never been denied; and the piece is just as effective now—in the theatre, and also in the library—as it was a quarter of a century ago. Whether or not it may be reckoned among the great plays of the world is a question not of method but of subject-matter. In consequence, this question must be answered by each student for himself. In estimating matters of technique, the layman may be guided by the specialist: a critic may make clear the reasons why a portrait of King Philip by Velasquez is a wonderful achievement, despite the fact that the sitter was not a beautiful, nor even an interesting, man: but the layman must always be the final judge of the importance of the artist's subject-matter, and its capacity to capture and enchain his interest.

To the present writer—speaking as a layman—it appears that *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* lacks those intimations of the universal which are apparent in the tragedies of Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare, and in certain of the comedies of Molière. Pinero has not attempted to encompass, with a swift and summarising vision, a view of an eternal truth of life in general: instead, he has attempted merely to encompass, in particular entirety, a view of a single "modern instance" of life as he saw it to be lived in the world about him. His art is not extensive but intensive. He is interested more in facts—which have to be observed—than in theories—which have to be imagined. In common with all other artists who are typically modern, he examines life through a microscope—which limits the field of vision while intensi-

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fying the acuteness of details—instead of wondering at life through the medium of a macroscope—which blurs details in the process of extending the scope of vision.

The story of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* might reasonably happen in contemporary life; but its happening depends upon a collocation of characters that are *exceptional* instead of universal. Were it not for Aubrey Tanqueray's quixotic undertaking to marry Paula Ray and to rehabilitate her in the circles of respectable society, there would be no drama. Granted Aubrey's character, granted the fact that he has arrived at that perilous period of life which is defined by Cayley Drummle as "L'age critique," granted also the cold experience and dissatisfying sequel of his unfortunate first marriage, his determination is not only logical but destined; yet we feel that Aubrey is not, by any means, an ordinary person, and that the average man (who is an image of ourselves) would have acted differently, and would thereby have avoided all the woe which follows from that pre-determined attitude of mind on which the play is based.

Here we have, therefore, an intensive study of an exceptional circumstance, instead of an aerial recognisance of some eternal truth of life at large. Yet, within its limits, the drama is absolutely true. All the characters are living people, down to and including the scarcely noticed servant, Morse. Furthermore, these characters are so conceived that they continuously set each other off by the emphasis of contrast. The twisted and exacerbated Paula is contrasted first with the young and virginal Ellean and later with the mature and respectable Mrs. Cortelyon. Aubrey's tragic lack of a saving sense of humour is accentuated by the light and almost eloquent vivacity of Cayley Drummle. Here we find a company of people who, though scarcely interesting in themselves, become unusually interesting when brought into conjunction. The play revealed—at that historic moment when it was composed—a new potentiality of interest, dependent mainly on a minute and careful study of the reactions between character and character.

But the proper function of the critic, in examining *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* is to call attention to its mastery of method. It is not at all excessive to assert that no other play—before or since—has ever been constructed more neatly, more compactly, or more effectively. Pinero has managed, absolutely, in the treatment of his subject-matter, to "give rise to the greatest possible amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which"—according to his own assertion—"is the one great function of the theatre."

The first act of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* has never been surpassed in technical efficiency; and it stands as a monument of exposition that must be studied by all future playwrights. When the curtain rises, and discloses the conclusion of a dinner-party that is more than usually intimate, the eye is caught immediately by the presence of an empty chair. The ingeniously retarded entrance of Cayley Drummle makes all the more emphatic the narrative of his apologetic explanation of the reason for his tardiness,—an explanation which underscores in retrospect the halting and half-completed exposition of Aubrey's matrimonial adventure. The *gradual* manner in which the tale of Aubrey Tanqueray's intention is delivered, first—in outline—to Misquith and to Jayne, and later—with all its lights and shadings—to the more affectionate and also the more critical perceptiveness of Cayley Drummle, is worthy of the highest praise as a piece of strategy.

One of Pinero's most admirable attributes as a tactician is his ability to turn a difficulty to account, and to make the weak points in his structural pattern serve the purpose of strong points in his scheme of characterisation. For instance, it is commonly regarded as a technical mistake to employ, for sheer convenience in setting forth the exposition of a play, certain characters who serve no other purpose in the pattern and are subsequently banished from the stage. Pinero has done this with Misquith and with Jayne. Yet he has managed cleverly to make a virtue of what might



have seemed a fault, by permitting Aubrey to tell them (and incidentally to tell the audience) that this meeting is probably their last and that he scarcely expects them to frequent his house after the consummation of his contemplated second marriage. The disappearance of Jayne and Misquith from the cast of characters becomes, in consequence, illustrative of an admitted fact of actual experience, and contributes to the central subject-matter of the play.

Consider, also, another and a greater difficulty which the dramatist encountered in laying out his exposition, and which he turned to positive advantage. The scene of the first act is set, of necessity, in Aubrey's bachelor chambers, and the hour, of necessity, is late; yet, on the other hand, it is essential that the heroine should be introduced to the audience before the first act is completed. The problem was to find a means of making plausible the appearance of Paula in the Albany at eleven o'clock at night; and this problem was dexterously solved by an irresistible appeal to the sense of characterisation. The ordinary woman would hesitate before committing such a breach of the conventions of society; but Paula is projected as precisely the sort of woman who would do this sort of thing. Her sudden and unforeseen appearance is no less surprising to Aubrey than it is to the audience; and Aubrey's perturbation is accentuated by the pertinent reactions of his servant, Morse. By these devices, an entrance that might have seemed unmotivated is made to appear not only reasonable but inevitable.

This marvellous first act is replete with many instances of that technical procedure which has been defined by Mr. William Archer as "foreshadowing." The fire is prepared and pointed out before Aubrey has occasion to burn the all-important written narrative which Paula—impelled by an eleventh-hour impulse—has come to place within his hands. Notice, also, the extreme dexterity of the device by which the unread letter from Ellean is set before the clock upon the mantel-piece and made to stare at the audience throughout the subsequent dialogue between Aubrey and Paula; and

consider how immeasurably less effective the entire scene would be if this letter were not brought upon the stage by Morse until the moment when Aubrey is ultimately ready to open it and read it.

The suicide which terminates *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is—to quote again the phraseology of Mr. Archer—recurrently "foreshadowed" without ever being utterly "forestalled." In the first act, Paula—recalling the suicide of a certain Connie Tirlemont—says, rather casually, "Do you know, I feel certain I should make away with myself if anything serious happened to me." In the second act, she says—in a sudden fit of temper—"You'll kill me with this life!" In the third act, she is reminded acutely of the tragic end of Connie Tirlemont by the vulgar chatter of Lady Orreyed *à propos* of "the diamond and ruby tiara that Charley Prestwick gave to Connie Tirlemont years ago." In consequence of the accumulated repetition of such foreward-pointing passages as these, the final suicide of Paula achieves the impressive effect which results from the completion of a pre-determined pattern, instead of the more striking but less permanent effect which results from the sudden startling of surprise.

In the third act of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* there is yet another instance of the dramatist's dexterity in turning a technical difficulty to positive account. The scene is set in Aubrey's home in Surrey. We have been told that Ellean has gone away to Paris for an indefinite period, to enjoy a taste of life under the admonitory care of Mrs. Cortelyon. The exigencies of the play require that Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean should return, suddenly and unexpectedly, to the quiet and secluded house in Surrey. In actual life, people do not change their plans and travel overseas without announcing their intentions in advance. The technical problem was to find a reasonable means for bringing both these women back from Paris without foreknowledge on the part of the one person most interested in their movements. Pinero solved this problem by making, once again, an irresistible appeal to



the sense of characterisation. Letters announcing a drastic change of plan *have been* written and dispatched by Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean; but these letters have been intercepted and suppressed by Paula, because of her insane and irremediable jealousy. Thus, an entrance which—in pattern—might be merely adventitious is made to seem inevitably motivated.

At the outset of the second act, a letter from Paula Tanqueray to Lady Orreyed—written, sealed, addressed, and ready for delivery—is discussed as a dramatic topic between Paula and her husband. At the close of this discussion, the topic is dropped and the letter is tossed aside. Many more apparently important matters are subsequently brought to the attention of the audience, before—at the very end of the act—Paula suddenly picks up the letter and orders a servant to dispatch it, in defiance of her husband. This gesture brings about the culmination of the act; but the point to be observed is that Paula's action at this moment would be technically ineffective, were it not for the solid basis of the author's antecedent preparation.

The one recurrent criticism which is urged against *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is that the "big scene" which occurs at the climax of the penultimate act is accidental and not inevitable. A full discussion of this question would require a complete review of the theory of truth in art. Space is lacking for extensive argument upon this point; but the present writer may be permitted to summarise his views of the principle involved. When Paula, in the first act, hands to Aubrey a written account of her past life, including a list of all of her adventures, and when Aubrey—like the gentleman that he is shown to be—burns this narrative unread, we feel instinctively that the ghost of some experience recorded in that letter will rise up subsequently, to curse both Paula and himself. This feeling is so emphatic that it afflicts us almost with the force of that *nemesis* which was customarily foreshadowed by the tragic dramatists of ancient Greece.

Granted this establishment of a reasonable premonition, it became the duty of the playwright to accomplish the foreshadowed *nemesis* in such a way as to "give rise to the greatest amount of that peculiar kind of emotional effect, the production of which is the one great function of the theatre." It was not, perhaps, inevitable that the virginal Ellean should fall in love with a man who had previously lived illicitly with her step-mother; but this coincidence was at least imaginable, and—once imagined—it showed itself superior in emphasis to any other possible concrete embodiment of that abstract truth which had been predicated as the basis of the play.

Let us remember always that the drama should be dramatic, and that the theatre should be theatrical, for the same reason that all art should be artistic. Whenever a dramatist is offered a choice between what *might* happen and what *must* happen, he should choose the alternative that is the more emphatic and the more effective. If his principle is basically right, he may be permitted to embody it in the emphatic terms of an interesting probability, instead of being required to express it in the less impressive terms of an uninteresting likelihood.

An examination of the literary aspect of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* brings up the entire question of what ought to be regarded as "literary merit" in the contemporary drama. Pinero himself—in a memorable lecture on *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Dramatist,* delivered before the Philosophical Institution of Edinburgh in 1903—has drawn a clear distinction between "the absolute beauty of words, such beauty as Ruskin or Pater might achieve in an eloquent passage," and "the beauty of dramatic fitness to the character and the situation."

Because of the physical conditions of the Elizabethan theatre, it was necessary that every Elizabethan playwright should be a poet, or at least a rhetorician; but the very different conventions of the modern theatre require an equipment which is less auditory and more visual. No critic



endowed with ears to hear could disagree with Matthew Arnold's dictum that such a line as Shakespeare's, "Absent thee from felicity a while," must be accepted as a veritable "touchstone" of literary style; but a special student of the modern drama may be permitted to advance the argument that a contemporary dramatist may often display the finest sense of literary tact by avoiding any indication of literary eloquence. As Stevenson once said,—it is easy to write well, but it is always hard to say precisely what you mean; and the modern playwright—who confines himself to facts—must frequently forego the allurements of an easy eloquence, in order to suggest the common prose of conversation.

Beside that famous phrase, "Absent thee from felicity a while," I should like to set another phrase—selected from the text of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*—which illustrates *in parvo* the very different ideal of writing required by our modern drama. This is the line, "Exactly six minutes." In the phrasing of this speech, there is discernible no hint of that "absolute beauty of words which Ruskin or Pater might achieve in an eloquent passage;" but, for students endowed with eyes to see, there is a superlative beauty "of dramatic fitness to the character and the situation."

This little line—"Exactly six minutes"—is spoken at the very outset of the second act of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*. It satisfies at once those indefinite prognostications which have been predicated on the basis of the antecedent act of exposition. It tells us—at a moment when we ardently desire to be told—all we wish and need to know; and it foreshadows absolutely and inevitably the outcome of the action. This line—which has been chosen among many—is perfect in "dramatic fitness." It is not eloquent; it is not even "literary," in the narrow sense; but it illustrates superbly a supreme solution of that special problem which confronts all writers for the modern stage.

The evolution of dramatic mood in *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is no less notable than the technical pattern of the underlying structure. The first act is logical and lucid;

the second act is hectic and perturbed; the third act is startling and surprising; and the fourth act is tragic and serene. The rise of interest throughout the exhibition of this play might be represented graphically by Hogarth's "line of beauty." The climax comes—as it logically ought to come—at the conclusion of the penultimate act; but the final and conclusive chapter affords no sense of anti-climax, because of that maturity of mood which casts a sort of ægis over it.

Paula's farewell speeches in the final act call tears into the eyes, whenever they are listened to—as Mrs. Campbell speaks them—and whenever they are read. Students who examine them with care may perceive that such phrases as "raddled and ruddled,"—"a wreck, a caricature, a candle that gutters,"—are a little too formal and rhetorical to sound absolutely natural. In this connection, I recollect a conversation with Pinero in the course of which he said,—"If I should ever write an actual transcript of an actual conversation, it would not sound true when spoken on the stage. In the theatre, it is necessary for people to talk a little more rhetorically than they talk in life, in order to suggest the illusion of reality in the large space of a public auditorium. Some of my writing may look artificial when you see it on the printed page; but I meant it to sound natural to the people who came to hear it in the theatre. A dramatist must never try to 'write down' to the public: he should always try to aim a little—but just a very little—above the topmost reaching of their heads."

Pinero is accustomed to insist that all his works are plays of character, and that he never writes a piece to point a moral or to illustrate an abstract theory. He once said to me, in conversation,—"If any 'lesson' is to be derived from any of my dramas, it is merely the same 'lesson' that would be inferred from any similar circumstance in life itself. Critics talk about the 'theme' of this play or of that. In practice, that abstraction which they call a 'thesis' is the last thing that occurs to me: I do not become aware of it until my work has been completed."



Ibsen, when he began the preparation of *A Doll's House,* started with an abstract thesis which he had already noted down in writing; but, when he began the preparation of *Hedda Gabler,* he started merely with a group of characters. The second process is the more creative of the two; and it is this process that is followed by Pinero. Yet each of the masterpieces of Pinero seems to illustrate a theme, which—in Aristotle's phrase—"informs" it to the last and least detail. The thesis of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* is summed up in that memorable line of Paula's, "I believe the future is only the past again, entered through another gate." In Pinero's hands, the *nemesis* of the Greeks has been humanised and made subjective. The reason why Paula Tanqueray is unable to escape from, or obliterate, her past is merely that her past is still, and evermore, a part of her. It is a basic principle of character that what we are at any moment is merely the sum-total of all that we have been. Within the limits of this life, there is no such thing as a "forgiveness of sins;" because all of our accomplished errors, together with all of our accomplished acts of virtue, have gone into the making of us. "The child is father of the man;" and the man cannot escape—for better or for worse—the consequences of what the child has done. This is the modern doctrine which informs our modern drama. As Aubrey says, in the last act of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* "That's an awful belief;" but it is, at least, a theory that must be reckoned with and cannot be evaded.

The "message" of Pinero seems to be that destiny is nothing but another name for character, and that the only tragedy in life is the tragedy of failing in the future by reason of the fact that we have failed already in the past. In 1893 this was a new theme in the theatre; and it is still the leading theme of the contemporary drama. We shall never find a heaven on this earth until we have discovered a sure and scientific way of escaping from ourselves.

C. H.



THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS



PERSONS

AUBREY TANQUERAY.
PAULA.
ELLEAN.
CAYLEY DRUMMLE.
MRS. CORTELYON.
CAPTAIN HUGH ARDALE.
GORDON JAYNE, M.D.
FRANK MISQUITH, Q.C., M.P.
SIR GEORGE ORREYED, BART.
LADY ORREYED.
MORSE.

The Present Day.

The Scene of the First Act is laid at MR. TANQUERAY'S *rooms, No. 2 x, The Albany, in the month of November; the occurrences of the succeeding Acts take place at his house, "Highercombe," near Willowmere, Surrey, during the early part of the following year.*



THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY

Original cast, as first disclosed at the St. James's Theatre, May 27th, 1893.

AUBREY TANQUERAY . .	*Mr. George Alexander*
SIR GEORGE ORREYED, BART .	*Mr. A. Vane-Tempest*
CAPTAIN HUGH ARDALE . .	*Mr. Ben Webster*
CAYLEY DRUMMLE . . .	*Mr. Cyril Maude*
FRANK MISQUITH, Q.C., M.P.	*Mr. Nutcombe Gould*
GORDON JAYNE, M.D. . .	*Mr. Murray Hathorn*
MORSE	*Mr. Alfred Holles*
LADY ORREYED	*Miss Edith Chester*
MRS. CORTELYON . . .	*Miss Amy Roselle*
PAULA	*Mrs. Patrick Campbell*
ELLEAN	*Miss Maude Millett*

THE SECOND MRS. TANQUERAY

THE FIRST ACT

AUBREY TANQUERAY'S *Chambers in the Albany—a richly and tastefully-decorated room, elegantly and luxuriously furnished: on the right a large pair of doors opening into another room, on the left at the further end of the room a small door leading to a bed-chamber. A circular table is laid for a dinner for four persons, which has now reached the stage of dessert and coffee. Everything in the apartment suggests wealth and refinement. The fire is burning brightly.*

AUBREY TANQUERAY, MISQUITH, *and* JAYNE *are seated at the dinner-table.* AUBREY *is forty-two, handsome, winning in manner, his speech and bearing retaining some of the qualities of young-manhood.* MISQUITH *is about forty-seven, genial and portly.* JAYNE *is a year or two* MISQUITH'S *senior; soft-speaking and precise—in appearance a type of the prosperous town physician.* MORSE, AUBREY'S *servant, places a little cabinet of cigars and the spirit-lamp on the table beside* AUBREY, *and goes out.*

MISQUITH.

Aubrey, it is a pleasant yet dreadful fact to contemplate, but it's nearly fifteen years since I first dined with you. You lodged in Piccadilly in those days, over a hat-shop. Jayne, I met you at that dinner, and Cayley Drummle.



JAYNE.

Yes, yes. What a pity it is that Cayley isn't here to-night.

AUBREY.

Confound the old gossip! His empty chair has been staring us in the face all through dinner. I ought to have told Morse to take it away.

MISQUITH.

Odd, his sending no excuse.

AUBREY.

I'll walk round to his lodgings later on and ask after him.

MISQUITH.

I'll go with you.

JAYNE.

So will I.

AUBREY.

[*Opening the cigar-cabinet.*] Doctor, it's useless to tempt you, I know. Frank—[MISQUITH *and* AUBREY *smoke.*] I particularly wished Cayley Drummle to be one of us to-night. You two fellows and Cayley are my closest, my best friends——

MISQUITH.

My dear Aubrey!

JAYNE.

I rejoice to hear you say so.

AUBREY.

And I wanted to see the three of you round this table. You can't guess the reason.

MISQUITH.

You desired to give us a most excellent dinner.

JAYNE.

Obviously.

AUBREY.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Well—I—[*glancing at the clock*]—Cayley won't turn up now.

JAYNE.

H'm, hardly.

AUBREY.

Then you two shall hear it. Doctor, Frank, this is the last time we are to meet in these rooms.

JAYNE.

The last time?

MISQUITH.

You're going to leave the Albany?

AUBREY.

Yes. You've heard me speak of a house I built in the country years ago, haven't you?

MISQUITH.

In Surrey.

AUBREY.

Well, when my wife died I cleared out of that house and left it. I think of trying the place again.

MISQUITH.

But you'll go raving mad if ever you find yourself down there alone.

AUBREY.

Ah, but I sha'n't be alone, and that's what I wanted to tell you. I'm going to be married.



JAYNE.

Going to be married?

MISQUITH.

Married?

AUBREY.

Yes—to-morrow.

JAYNE.

To-morrow?

MISQUITH.

You take my breath away! My dear fellow, I—I—of course, I congratulate you.

JAYNE.

And—and—so do I—heartily.

AUBREY.

Thanks—thanks.

[*There is a moment or two of embarrassment.*

MISQUITH.

Er—ah—this is an excellent cigar.

JAYNE.

Ah—um—your coffee is remarkable.

AUBREY.

Look here; I dare say you two old friends think this treatment very strange, very unkind. So I want you to understand me. You know a marriage often cools friendships. What's the usual course of things? A man's engagement is given out, he is congratulated, complimented upon his choice; the church is filled with troops of friends, and he goes away happily to a chorus of good wishes. He comes back, sets up house in town or country, and thinks to resume the old associations, the old companionships. My

dear Frank, my dear good doctor, it's very seldom that it can be done. Generally, a worm has begun to eat its way into those hearty, unreserved, pre-nuptial friendships; a damnable constraint sets in and acts like a wasting disease; and so, believe me, in nine cases out of ten a man's marriage severs for him more close ties than it forms.

MISQUITH.

Well, my dear Aubrey, I earnestly hope——

AUBREY.

I know what you're going to say, Frank. I hope so, too. In the meantime let's face dangers. I've reminded you of the *usual* course of things, but my marriage isn't even the conventional sort of marriage likely to satisfy society. Now, Cayley's a bachelor, but you two men have wives. By-the-bye, my love to Mrs. Misquith and to Mrs. Jayne when you get home—don't forget that. Well, your wives may not—like—the lady I'm going to marry.

JAYNE.

Aubrey, forgive me for suggesting that the lady you are going to marry may not like our wives—mine at least; I beg your pardon, Frank.

AUBREY.

Quite so; then I must go the way my wife goes.

MISQUITH.

Come, come, pray don't let us anticipate that either side will be called upon to make such a sacrifice.

AUBREY.

Yes, yes, let us anticipate it. And let us make up our minds to have no slow bleeding-to-death of our friendship.



We'll end a pleasant chapter here to-night, and after to-night start afresh. When my wife and I settle down at Willowmere it's possible that we shall all come together. But if this isn't to be, for Heaven's sake let us recognize that it is simply because it *can't* be, and not wear hypocritical faces and suffer and be wretched. Doctor, Frank—[*holding out his hands, one to* MISQUITH, *the other to* JAYNE]—good luck to all of us!

MISQUITH.

But—but—do I understand we are to ask nothing? Not even the lady's name, Aubrey?

AUBREY.

The lady, my dear Frank, belongs to the next chapter, and in that her name is Mrs. Aubrey Tanqueray.

JAYNE.

[*Raising his coffee-cup.*] Then, in an old-fashioned way, I propose a toast. Aubrey, Frank, I give you "The Next Chapter!"

[*They drink the toast, saying, "The Next Chapter!"*

AUBREY.

Doctor, find a comfortable chair; Frank, you too. As we're going to turn out by-and-bye, let me scribble a couple of notes now while I think of them.

MISQUITH *and* JAYNE.

Certainly—yes, yes.

AUBREY.

It might slip my memory when I get back.

[AUBREY *sits at a writing-table at the other end of the room, and writes.*

JAYNE.

[*To* MISQUITH *in a whisper.*] Frank—— [MISQUITH *quietly leaves his chair, and sits nearer to* JAYNE.] What is all this? Simply a morbid crank of Aubrey's with regard to ante-nuptial acquaintances?

MISQUITH.

H'm! Did you notice *one* expression he used?

JAYNE.

Let me think——

MISQUITH.

"My marriage is not even the conventional sort of marriage likely to satisfy society."

JAYNE.

Bless me, yes! What does that suggest?

MISQUITH.

That he has a particular rather than a general reason for anticipating estrangement from his friends, I'm afraid.

JAYNE.

A horrible *mésalliance!* A dairymaid who has given him a glass of milk during a day's hunting, or a little anæmic shopgirl! Frank, I'm utterly wretched!

MISQUITH.

My dear Jayne, speaking in absolute confidence, I have never been more profoundly depressed in my life.

MORSE *enters.*

MORSE.

[*Announcing*] Mr. Drummle.



[CAYLEY DRUMMLE *enters briskly. He is a neat little man of about five-and-forty, in manner bright, airy, debonair, but with an undercurrent of seriousness.*

[MORSE *retires.*

DRUMMLE.

I'm in disgrace; nobody realises that more thoroughly than I do. Where's my host?

AUBREY.

[*Who has risen.*] Cayley.

DRUMMLE.

[*Shaking hands with him.*] Don't speak to me till I have tendered my explanation. A harsh word from anybody would unman me.

[MISQUITH *and* JAYNE *shake hands with* DRUMMLE.

AUBREY.

Have you dined?

DRUMMLE.

No—unless you call a bit of fish, a cutlet, and a pancake dining.

AUBREY.

Cayley, this is disgraceful.

JAYNE.

Fish, a cutlet, and a pancake will require a great deal of explanation.

MISQUITH.

Especially the pancake. My dear friend, your case looks miserably weak.

DRUMMLE.

Hear me! hear me!

JAYNE.

Now then!

MISQUITH.

Come!

AUBREY.

Well!

DRUMMLE.

It so happens that to-night I was exceptionally early in dressing for dinner.

MISQUITH.

For which dinner—the fish and cutlet?

DRUMMLE.

For *this* dinner, of course—really, Frank! At a quarter to eight, in fact, I found myself trimming my nails, with ten minutes to spare. Just then enter my man with a note—would I hasten, as fast as cab could carry me, to old Lady Orreyed in Bruton Street?—"sad trouble." Now, recollect please I had ten minutes on my hands, old Lady Orreyed was a very dear friend of my mother's, and was in some distress.

AUBREY.

Cayley, come to the fish and cutlet!

MISQUITH *and* JAYNE.

Yes, yes, and the pancake!

DRUMMLE.

Upon my word! Well, the scene in Bruton Street beggars description; the women servants looked scared, the men drunk; and there was poor old Lady Orreyed on the floor of her boudoir like Queen Bess among her pillows.



AUBREY.

What's the matter?

DRUMMLE.

[*To everybody.*] You know George Orreyed?

MISQUITH.

Yes.

JAYNE.

I've met him.

DRUMMLE.

Well, he's a thing of the past.

AUBREY.

Not dead!

DRUMMLE.

Certainly, in the worst sense. He's married Mabel Hervey.

MISQUITH.

What!

DRUMMLE.

It's true—this morning. The poor mother showed me his letter—a dozen curt words, and some of those ill-spelt.

MISQUITH.

[*Walking up to the fireplace.*] I'm very sorry.

JAYNE.

Pardon my ignorance—who *was* Mabel Hervey?

DRUMMLE.

You don't——? Oh, of course not. Miss Hervey—Lady Orreyed, as she now is—was a lady who would have been, perhaps has been, described in the reports of the Police or the Divorce Court as an actress. Had she belonged to a

lower stratum of our advanced civilization she would, in the event of judicial inquiry, have defined her calling with equal justification as that of a dressmaker. To do her justice, she is a type of a class which is immortal. Physically, by the strange caprice of creation, curiously beautiful; mentally, she lacks even the strength of deliberate viciousness. Paint her portrait, it would symbolise a creature perfectly patrician; lance a vein of her superbly-modelled arm, you would get the poorest *vin ordinaire!* Her affections, emotions, impulses, her very existence—a burlesque! Flaxen, five-and-twenty, and feebly frolicsome; anybody's, in less gentle society I should say everybody's, property! That, doctor, was Miss Hervey who is the new Lady Orreyed. Dost thou like the picture?

MISQUITH.

Very good, Cayley! Bravo!

AUBREY.

[*Laying his hand on* DRUMMLE'S *shoulder.*] You'd scarcely believe it, Jayne, but none of us really know anything about this lady, our gay young friend here, I suspect, least of all.

DRUMMLE.

Aubrey, I applaud your chivalry.

AUBREY.

And perhaps you'll let me finish a couple of letters which Frank and Jayne have given me leave to write. [*Returning to the writing-table.*] Ring for what you want, like a good fellow!

[AUBREY *resumes his writing.*

MISQUITH.

[*To* DRUMMLE.] Still, the fish and cutlet remain unexplained.



DRUMMLE.

Oh, the poor old woman was so weak that I insisted upon her taking some food, and felt there was nothing for it but to sit down opposite her. The fool! the blackguard!

MISQUITH.

Poor Orreyed! Well, he's gone under for a time.

DRUMMLE.

For a time! My dear Frank, I tell you he has absolutely ceased to be. [AUBREY, *who has been writing busily, turns his head towards the speakers and listens. His lips are set, and there is a frown upon his face.*] For all practical purposes you may regard him as the late George Orreyed. To-morrow the very characteristics of his speech, as we remember them, will have become obsolete.

JAYNE.

But surely, in the course of years, he and his wife will outlive——

DRUMMLE.

No, no, doctor, don't try to upset one of my settled beliefs. You may dive into many waters, but there is *one* social Dead Sea——!

JAYNE.

Perhaps you're right.

DRUMMLE.

Right! Good God! I wish you could prove me otherwise! Why, for years I've been sitting, and watching and waiting.

MISQUITH.

You're in form to-night, Cayley. May we ask where you've been in the habit of squandering your useful leisure?

DRUMMLE.

Where? On the shore of that same sea.

MISQUITH.

And, pray, what have you been waiting for?

DRUMMLE.

For some of my best friends *to come up.* [AUBREY *utters a half-stifled exclamation of impatience; then he hurriedly gathers up his papers from the writing-table. The three men turn to him.*] Eh?

AUBREY.

Oh, I—I'll finish my letters in the other room if you'll excuse me for five minutes. Tell Cayley the news.

[*He goes out.*

DRUMMLE.

[*Hurrying to the door.*] My dear fellow, my jabbering has disturbed you! I'll never talk again as long as I live!

MISQUITH.

Close the door, Cayley.

[DRUMMLE *shuts the door.*

JAYNE.

Cayley—

DRUMMLE.

[*Advancing to the dinner table.*] A smoke, a smoke, or I perish!

[*Selects a cigar from the little cabinet.*

JAYNE.

Cayley, marriages are in the air.

DRUMMLE.

Are they? Discover the bacillus, doctor, and destroy it.



JAYNE.

I mean, among our friends.

DRUMMLE.

Oh, Nugent Warrinder's engagement to Lady Alice Tring. I've heard of that. They're not to be married till the spring.

JAYNE.

Another marriage that concerns us a little takes place to-morrow.

DRUMMLE.

Whose marriage?

JAYNE.

Aubrey's.

DRUMMLE.

Aub——! [*Looking towards* MISQUITH.] Is it a joke?

MISQUITH.

No.

DRUMMLE.

[*Looking from* MISQUITH *to* JAYNE.] To whom?

MISQUITH.

He doesn't tell us.

JAYNE.

We three were asked here to-night to receive the announcement. Aubrey has some theory that marriage is likely to alienate a man from his friends, and it seems to me he has taken the precaution to wish us good-bye.

MISQUITH.

No, no.

JAYNE.

Practically, surely.

DRUMMLE.

[*Thoughtfully.*] Marriage in general, does he mean, or *this* marriage?

JAYNE.

That's the point. Frank says——

MISQUITH.

No, no, no; I feared it suggested——

JAYNE.

Well, well. [*To* DRUMMLE.] What do you think of it?

DRUMMLE.

[*After a slight pause.*] Is there a light there? [*Lighting his cigar.*] He—wraps the lady—in mystery—you say?

MISQUITH.

Most modestly.

DRUMMLE.

Aubrey's—not—a very—young man.

JAYNE.

Forty-three.

DRUMMLE.

Ah! *L'age critique!*

MISQUITH.

A dangerous age—yes, yes.

DRUMMLE.

When you two fellows go home, do you mind leaving me behind here?

MISQUITH.

Not at all.



JAYNE.

By all means.

DRUMMLE.

All right. [*Anxiously.*] Deuce take it, the man's second marriage mustn't be another mistake!

[*With his head bent he walks up to the fireplace.*

JAYNE.

You knew him in his short married life, Cayley. Terribly unsatisfactory, wasn't it?

DRUMMLE.

Well—[*Looking at the door.*] I quite closed that door?

MISQUITH.

Yes.

[*Settles himself on the sofa;* JAYNE *is seated in an arm-chair.*

DRUMMLE.

[*Smoking with his back to the fire.*] He married a Miss Herriott; that was in the year eighteen—confound dates—twenty years ago. She was a lovely creature—by Jove, she was; by religion a Roman Catholic. She was one of your cold sort, you know—all marble arms and black velvet. I remember her with painful distinctness as the only woman who ever made me nervous.

MISQUITH.

Ha, ha!

DRUMMLE.

He loved her—to distraction, as they say. Jupiter, how fervently that poor devil courted her! But I don't believe she allowed him even to squeeze her fingers. She *was* an iceberg! As for kissing, the mere contact would have given

him chapped lips. However, he married her and took her away, the latter greatly to my relief.

JAYNE.

Abroad, you mean?

DRUMMLE.

Eh? Yes. I imagine he gratified her by renting a villa in Lapland, but I don't know. After a while they returned, and then I saw how wofully Aubrey had miscalculated results.

JAYNE.

Miscalculated——?

DRUMMLE.

He had reckoned, poor wretch, that in the early days of marriage she would thaw. But she didn't. I used to picture him closing his doors and making up the fire in the hope of seeing her features relax. Bless her, the thaw never set in! I believe she kept a thermometer in her stays and always registered ten degrees blow zero. However, in time a child came—a daughter.

JAYNE.

Didn't that——?

DRUMMLE.

Not a bit of it; it made matters worse. Frightened at her failure to stir up in him some sympathetic religious belief, she determined upon strong measures with regard to the child. He opposed her for a miserable year or so, but she wore him down, and the insensible little brat was placed in a convent, first in France, then in Ireland. Not long afterwards the mother died, strangely enough, of fever, the only warmth, I believe, that ever came to that woman's body.

MISQUITH.

Don't, Cayley!



JAYNE.

The child is living, we know.

DRUMMLE.

Yes, if you choose to call it living. Miss Tanqueray—a young woman of nineteen now—is in the Loretto convent at Armagh. She professes to have found her true vocation in a religious life, and within a month or two will take final vows.

MISQUITH.

He ought to have removed his daughter from the convent when the mother died.

DRUMMLE.

Yes, yes, but absolutely at the end there was reconciliation between husband and wife, and she won his promise that the child should complete her conventual education. He reaped his reward. When he attempted to gain his girl's confidence and affection he was too late; he found he was dealing with the spirit of the mother. You remember his visit to Ireland last month?

JAYNE.

Yes.

DRUMMLE.

That was to wish his girl good-bye.

MISQUITH.

Poor fellow!

DRUMMLE.

He sent for me when he came back. I think he must have had a lingering hope that the girl would relent—would come to life, as it were—at the last moment, for, for an hour or so, in this room, he was terribly shaken. I'm sure he'd clung to that hope from the persistent way

in which he kept breaking off in his talk to repeat one dismal word, as if he couldn't realise his position without dinning this damned word into his head.

JAYNE.

What word was that?

DRUMMLE.

Alone—alone.

AUBREY *enters.*

AUBREY.

A thousand apologies!

DRUMMLE.

[*Gaily.*] We are talking about you, my dear Aubrey.

[*During the telling of the story,* MISQUITH *has risen and gone to the fire, and* DRUMMLE *has thrown himself full-length on the sofa.* AUBREY *now joins* MISQUITH *and* JAYNE.

AUBREY.

Well, Cayley, are you surprised?

DRUMMLE.

Surp——! I haven't been surprised for twenty years.

AUBREY.

And you're not angry with me?

DRUMMLE.

Angry! [*Rising.*] Because you considerately withhold the name of a lady with whom it is now the object of my life to become acquainted? My dear fellow, you pique my curiosity, you give zest to my existence! And as for a



wedding, who on earth wants to attend that familiar and probably draughty function? Ugh! My cigar's out.

AUBREY.

Let's talk about something else.

MISQUITH.

[*Looking at his watch.*] Not to-night, Aubrey.

AUBREY.

My dear Frank!

MISQUITH.

I go up to Scotland to-morrow, and there are some little matters—

JAYNE.

I am off too.

AUBREY.

No, no.

JAYNE.

I must: I have to give a look to a case in Clifford Street on my way home.

AUBREY.

[*Going to the door.*] Well! [MISQUITH *and* JAYNE *exchange looks with* DRUMMLE. *Opening the door and calling.*] Morse, hats and coats! I shall write to you all next week from Genoa or Florence. Now, doctor, Frank, remember, my love to Mrs. Misquith and to Mrs. Jayne!

MORSE *enters with hats and coats.*

MISQUITH *and* JAYNE.

Yes, yes—yes, yes.

AUBREY.

And your young people!

[*As* MISQUITH *and* JAYNE *put on their coats there is the clatter of careless talk.*

JAYNE.

Cayley, I meet you at dinner on Sunday.

DRUMMLE.

At the Stratfields'. That's very pleasant.

MISQUITH.

[*Putting on his coat with* AUBREY'S *aid.*] Ah-h!

AUBREY.

What's wrong?

MISQUITH.

A twinge. Why didn't I go to Aix in August?

JAYNE.

[*Shaking hands with* DRUMMLE.] Good-night, Cayley.

DRUMMLE.

Good-night, my dear doctor!

MISQUITH.

[*Shaking hands with* DRUMMLE.] Cayley, are you in town for long?

DRUMMLE.

Dear friend, I'm nowhere for long. Good-night.

MISQUITH.

Good-night.

[AUBREY, JAYNE, *and* MISQUITH *go out, followed by* MORSE; *the hum of talk is continued outside.*

AUBREY.

A cigar, Frank?

MISQUITH.

No, thank you.



AUBREY.

Going to walk, doctor?

JAYNE.

If Frank will.

MISQUITH.

By all means.

AUBREY.

It's a cold night.

[*The door is closed.* DRUMMLE *remains standing with his coat on his arm and his hat in his hand.*

DRUMMLE.

[*To himself, thoughtfully.*] Now then! What the devil!— [AUBREY *returns.*

AUBREY.

[*Eyeing* DRUMMLE *a little awkwardly.*] Well, Cayley?

DRUMMLE.

Well, Aubrey?

[AUBREY *walks up to the fire and stands looking into it.*

AUBREY.

You're not going, old chap?

DRUMMLE.

[*Sitting.*] No.

AUBREY.

[*After a slight pause, with a forced laugh.*] Hah! Cayley, I never thought I should feel—shy—with you.

DRUMMLE.

Why do you?

AUBREY.

Never mind.

DRUMMLE.

Now, I can quite understand a man wishing to be married in the dark, as it were.

AUBREY.

You can?

DRUMMLE.

In your place I should very likely adopt the same course.

AUBREY.

You think so?

DRUMMLE.

And if I intended marrying a lady not prominently in society, as I presume you do—as I presume you do—

AUBREY.

Well?

DRUMMLE.

As I presume you do, I'm not sure that *I* should tender her for preliminary dissection at afternoon tea-tables.

AUBREY.

No?

DRUMMLE.

In fact, there is probably only one person—were I in your position to-night—with whom I should care to chat the matter over.

AUBREY.

Who's that?

DRUMMLE.

Yourself, of course. [*Going to* AUBREY *and standing beside him.*] Of course, yourself, old friend.

AUBREY.

[*After a pause.*] I must seem a brute to you.



But there are some acts which are hard to explain, hard to defend—

DRUMMLE.

To defend—

AUBREY.

Some acts which one must trust to time to put right.

[DRUMMLE *watches him for a moment, then takes up his hat and coat.*

DRUMMLE.

Well, I'll be moving.

AUBREY.

Cayley! Confound you and your old friendship! Do you think I forget it? Put your coat down! Why did you stay behind here? Cayley, the lady I am going to marry is the lady—who is known as—Mrs. Jarman. [*There is a pause.*

DRUMMLE.

[*In a low voice.*] Mrs. Jarman! are you serious?

[*He walks up to the fireplace, where he leans upon the mantelpiece uttering something like a groan.*

AUBREY.

As you've got this out of me I give you leave to say all you care to say. Come, we'll be plain with each other. You know Mrs. Jarman?

DRUMMLE.

I first met her at—what does it matter?

AUBREY.

Yes, yes, everything! Come!

DRUMMLE.

I met her at Homburg, two—three seasons ago.

AUBREY.

Not as Mrs. Jarman?

DRUMMLE.

No.

AUBREY.

She was then—?

DRUMMLE.

Mrs. Dartry.

AUBREY.

Yes. She has also seen you in London, she says.

DRUMMLE.

Certainly.

AUBREY.

In Alford Street. Go on.

DRUMMLE.

Please!

AUBREY.

I insist.

DRUMMLE.

[*With a slight shrug of the shoulders.*] Some time last year I was asked by a man to sup at his house, one night after the theatre.

AUBREY.

Mr. Selwyn Ethurst—a bachelor.

DRUMMLE.

Yes.

AUBREY.

You were surprised therefore to find Mr. Ethurst aided in his cursed hospitality by a lady.

DRUMMLE.

I was unprepared.



AUBREY.

The lady you had known as Mrs. Dartry? [DRUMMLE *inclines his head silently.*] There is something of a yachting cruise in the Mediterranean too, is there not?

DRUMMLE.

I joined Peter Jarman's yacht at Marseilles, in the Spring, a month before he died.

AUBREY.

Mrs. Jarman was on board?

DRUMMLE.

She was a kind hostess.

AUBREY.

And an old acquaintance?

DRUMMLE.

Yes.

AUBREY.

You have told your story.

DRUMMLE.

With your assistance.

AUBREY.

I have put you to the pain of telling it to show you that this is not the case of a blind man entrapped by an artful woman. Let me add that Mrs. Jarman has no legal right to that name; that she is simply Miss Ray—Miss Paula Ray.

DRUMMLE.

[*After a pause.*] I should like to express my regret, Aubrey, for the way in which I spoke of George Orreyed's marriage.

AUBREY.

You mean you compare Lady Orreyed with Miss Ray? [DRUMMLE *is silent.*] Oh, of course! To you, Cayley, all women who have been roughly treated, and who dare to survive by borrowing a little of our philosophy, are alike. You see in the crowd of the ill-used only one pattern; you can't detect the shades of goodness, intelligence, even nobility there. Well, how should you? The crowd is dimly lighted! And, besides, yours is the way of the world.

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey, I *live* in the world.

AUBREY.

The name we give our little parish of St. James's.

DRUMMLE.

[*Laying a hand on* AUBREY'S *shoulder.*] And you are quite prepared, my friend, to forfeit the esteem of your little parish?

AUBREY.

I avoid mortification by shifting from one parish to another. I give up Pall Mall for the Surrey hills; leave off varnishing my boots, and double the thickness of the soles.

DRUMMLE.

And your skin—do you double the thickness of that also?

AUBREY.

I know you think me a fool, Cayley—you needn't infer that I'm a coward into the bargain. No! I know what I'm doing, and I do it deliberately, defiantly. I'm alone: I injure no living soul by the step I'm going to take; and so you can't urge the one argument which might restrain me.



Of course, I don't expect you to think compassionately, fairly even, of the woman whom I—whom I am drawn to—

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey, I assure you I consider Mrs.—Miss Jarman—Mrs. Ray—Miss Ray—delightful. But I confess there is a form of chivalry which I gravely distrust, especially in a man of—our age.

AUBREY.

Thanks. I've heard you say that from forty till fifty a man is at heart either a stoic or a satyr.

DRUMMLE.

[*Protestingly.*] Ah! now—

AUBREY.

I am neither. I have a temperate, honourable affection for Mrs. Jarman. She has never met a man who has treated her well—I intend to treat her well. That's all. And in a few years, Cayley, if you've not quite forsaken me, I'll prove to you that it's possible to rear a life of happiness, of good repute, on a—miserable foundation.

DRUMMLE.

[*Offering his hand.*] Do prove it!

AUBREY.

[*Taking his hand.*] We have spoken too freely of—of Mrs. Jarman. I was excited—angry. Please forget it!

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey, when we next meet I shall remember nothing but my respect for the lady who bears your name.

MORSE *enters, closing the door behind him carefully.*

AUBREY.

What is it?

MORSE.

[*Hesitatingly.*] May I speak to you, sir? [*In an undertone.*] Mrs. Jarman, sir.

AUBREY.

[*Softly to* MORSE.] Mrs. Jarman! Do you mean she is at the lodge in her carriage?

MORSE.

No, sir—here. [AUBREY *looks towards* DRUMMLE, *perplexed.*] There's a nice fire in your—in that room, sir. [*Glancing in the direction of the door leading to the bedroom.*]

AUBREY.

[*Between his teeth, angrily.*] Very well.

[MORSE *retires.*

DRUMMLE.

[*Looking at his watch.*] A quarter to eleven—horrible! [*Taking up his hat and coat.*] Must get to bed—up late every night this week. [AUBREY *assists* DRUMMLE *with his coat.*] Thank you. Well, good-night, Aubrey. I feel I've been dooced serious, quite out of keeping with myself; pray overlook it.

AUBREY.

[*Kindly.*] Ah, Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

[*Putting on a neck-handkerchief.*] And remember that, after all, I'm merely a spectator in life; nothing more than a man at a play, in fact; only, like the old-fashioned playgoer, I love to see certain characters happy and comfortable at the finish. You understand?



AUBREY.

I think I do.

DRUMMLE.

Then, for as long as you can, old friend, will you—keep a stall for me?

AUBREY.

Yes, Cayley.

DRUMMLE.

[*Gaily.*] Ah, ha! Good-night! [*Bustling to the door.*] Don't bother! I'll let myself out! Good-night! God bless yer!

[*He goes out;* AUBREY *follows him.* MORSE *enters by the other door, carrying some unopened letters, which after a little consideration he places on the mantelpiece against the clock.* AUBREY *returns.*

AUBREY.

Yes?

MORSE.

You hadn't seen your letters that came by the nine o'clock post, sir; I've put 'em where they'll catch your eye by-and-bye.

AUBREY.

Thank you.

MORSE.

[*Hesitatingly.*] Gunter's cook and waiter have gone, sir. Would you prefer me to go to bed?

AUBREY.

[*Frowning.*] Certainly not.

MORSE.

Very well, sir. [*He goes out.*

AUBREY.

[*Opening the upper door.*] Paula! Paula!



PAULA *enters and throws her arms round his neck. She is a young woman of about twenty-seven: beautiful, fresh, innocent-looking. She is in superb evening dress.*

PAULA.

Dearest!

AUBREY.

Why have you come here?

PAULA.

Angry?

AUBREY.

Yes—no. But it's eleven o'clock.

PAULA.

[*Laughing.*] I know.

AUBREY.

What on earth will Morse think?

PAULA.

Do you trouble yourself about what servants *think?*

AUBREY.

Of course.

PAULA.

Goose! They're only machines made to wait upon people—and to give evidence in the Divorce Court. [*Looking round.*] Oh, indeed! A snug little dinner!

AUBREY.

Three men.

PAULA.

[*Suspiciously.*] Men?



AUBREY.

Men.

PAULA.

[*Penitently.*] Ah! [*Sitting at the table.*] I'm so hungry.

AUBREY.

Let me get you some game pie, or some—

PAULA.

No, no, hungry for this. What beautiful fruit! I love fruit when it's expensive. [*He clears a space on the table, places a plate before her, and helps her to fruit.*] I haven't dined, Aubrey dear.

AUBREY.

My poor girl! Why?

PAULA.

In the first place, I forgot to order any dinner, and my cook, who has always loathed me, thought he'd pay me out before he departed.

AUBREY.

The beast!

PAULA.

That's precisely what I—

AUBREY.

No, Paula!

PAULA.

What I told my maid to call him. What next will you think of me?

AUBREY.

Forgive me. You must be starved,

PAULA.

[*Eating fruit.*] *I* didn't care. As there was nothing to eat, I sat in my best frock, with my toes on the dining-room fender, and dreamt, oh, such a lovely dinner party.

AUBREY.

Dear lonely little woman!

PAULA.

It was perfect. I saw you at the end of a very long table, opposite me, and we exchanged sly glances now and again over the flowers. We were host and hostess, Aubrey, and had been married about five years.

AUBREY.

[*Kissing her hand.*] Five years.

PAULA.

And on each side of us was the nicest set imaginable—you know, dearest, the sort of men and women that can't be imitated.

AUBREY.

Yes, yes. Eat some more fruit.

PAULA.

But I haven't told you the best part of my dream.

AUBREY.

Tell me.

PAULA.

Well, although we had been married only such a few years, I seemed to know by the look on their faces that none of our guests had ever heard anything—anything—anything peculiar about the fascinating hostess.



AUBREY.

That's just how it will be, Paula. The world moves so quickly. That's just how it will be.

PAULA.

[*With a little grimace.*] I wonder! [*Glancing at the fire.*] Ugh! Do throw another log on.

AUBREY.

[*Mending the fire.*] There. But you mustn't be here long.

PAULA.

Hospitable wretch! I've something important to tell you. No, stay where you are. [*Turning from him, her face averted.*] Look here, that was my dream, Aubrey; but the fire went out while I was dozing, and I woke up with a regular fit of the shivers. And the result of it all was that I ran upstairs and scribbled you a letter.

AUBREY.

Dear baby!

PAULA.

Remain where you are. [*Taking a letter from her pocket.*] This is it. I've given you an account of myself, furnished you with a list of my adventures since I—you know. [*Weighing the letter in her hand.*] I wonder if it would go for a penny. Most of it you're acquainted with; *I've* told you a good deal, haven't I?

AUBREY.

Oh, Paula!

PAULA.

What I haven't told you I dare say you've heard from others. But in case they've omitted anything—the dears—it's all here.

AUBREY.

In Heaven's name, why must you talk like this to-night?

PAULA.

It may save discussion by-and-bye, don't you think? [*Holding out the letter.*] There you are.

AUBREY.

No, dear, no.

PAULA.

Take it. [*He takes the letter.*] Read it through after I've gone, and then—read it again, and turn the matter over in your mind finally. And if, even at the very last moment, you feel you—oughtn't to go to church with me, send a messenger to Pont Street, any time before eleven to-morrow, telling me that you're afraid, and I—I'll take the blow.

AUBREY.

Why, what—what do you think I am?

PAULA.

That's it. It's because I know you're such a dear good fellow that I want to save you the chance of ever feeling sorry you married me. I really love you so much, Aubrey, that to save you that, I'd rather you treated me as—as the others have done.

AUBREY.

[*Turning from her with a cry.*] Oh!

PAULA.

[*After a slight pause.*] I suppose I've shocked you. I can't help it if I have.

[*She sits, with assumed languor and indifference. He turns to her, advances, and kneels by her.*



AUBREY.

My dearest, you don't understand me. I—I can't bear to hear you always talking about—what's done with. I tell you I'll never remember it; Paula, can't you dismiss it? Try. Darling, if we promise each other to forget, to forget, we're bound to be happy. After all, it's a mechanical matter; the moment a wretched thought enters your head, you quickly think of something bright—it depends on one's will. Shall I burn this, dear? [*Referring to the letter he holds in his hand.*] Let me, let me!

PAULA.

[*With a shrug of the shoulders.*] I don't suppose there's much that's new to you in it,—just as you like.

[*He goes to the fire and burns the letter.*

AUBREY.

There's an end of it. [*Returning to her.*] What's the matter?

PAULA.

[*Rising, coldly.*] Oh, nothing! I'll go and put my cloak on.

AUBREY.

[*Detaining her.*] What *is* the matter?

PAULA.

Well, I think you might have said, "You're very generous, Paula," or at least, "Thank you, dear," when I offered to set you free.

AUBREY.

[*Catching her in his arms.*] Ah!

PAULA.

Ah! ah! Ha! ha! It's all very well, but you don't know

what it cost me to make such an offer. I do so want to be married.

AUBREY.

But you never imagined—?

PAULA.

Perhaps not. And yet I *did* think of what I'd do at the end of our acquaintance if you had preferred to behave like the rest.

[*Taking a flower from her bodice.*

AUBREY.

Hush!

PAULA.

Oh, I forgot!

AUBREY.

What would you have done when we parted?

PAULA.

Why, killed myself.

AUBREY.

Paula, dear!

PAULA.

It's true. [*Putting the flower in his buttonhole.*] Do you know, I feel certain I should make away with myself if anything serious happened to me.

AUBREY.

Anything serious! What, has nothing ever been serious to you, Paula?

PAULA.

Not lately; not since a long while ago. I made up my mind then to have done with taking things seriously. If I hadn't, I— However, we won't talk about that.



AUBREY.

But now, now, life will be different to you, won't it—quite different? Eh, dear?

PAULA.

Oh, yes, now. Only, Aubrey, mind you keep me always happy.

AUBREY.

I will try to.

PAULA.

I know I couldn't swallow a second big dose of misery. I know that if ever I felt wretched again—truly wretched—I should take a leaf out of Connie Tirlemont's book. You remember? They found her— [*With a look of horror.*]

AUBREY.

For God's sake, don't let your thoughts run on such things!

PAULA.

[*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, how scared you look! There, think of the time! Dearest, what will my coachman say? My cloak!

[*She runs off, gaily, by the upper door.* AUBREY *looks after her for a moment, then he walks up to the fire and stands warming his feet at the bars. As he does so he raises his head and observes the letters upon the mantelpiece. He takes one down quickly.*

AUBREY.

Ah! Ellean! [*Opening the letter and reading.*] "My dear father,—A great change has come over me. I believe my mother in Heaven has spoken to me, and counselled me to turn to you in your loneliness. At any rate, your words have reached my heart, and I no longer feel fitted for this

solemn life. I am ready to take my place by you. Dear father, will you receive me?—ELLEAN."

PAULA *re-enters, dressed in a handsome cloak. He stares at her as if he hardly realised her presence.*

PAULA.

What are you staring at? Don't you admire my cloak?

AUBREY.

Yes.

PAULA.

Couldn't you wait till I'd gone before reading your letters?

AUBREY.

[*Putting the letter away.*] I beg your pardon.

PAULA.

Take me down-stairs to the carriage. [*Slipping her arm through his.*] How I tease you! To-morrow! I'm so happy! [*They go out.*



THE SECOND ACT

A morning-room in AUBREY TANQUERAY'S *house, "Highercoombe," near Willowmere, Surrey—a bright and prettily furnished apartment of irregular shape, with double doors opening into a small hall at the back, another door on the left, and a large recessed window through which is obtained a view of extensive grounds. Everything about the room is charming and graceful. The fire is burning in the grate, and a small table is tastefully laid for breakfast. It is a morning in early spring, and the sun is streaming in through the window.*

AUBREY *and* PAULA *are seated at breakfast, and* AUBREY *is silently reading his letters. Two servants, a man and a woman, hand dishes and then retire. After a little while* AUBREY *puts his letters aside and looks across to the window.*

AUBREY.

Sunshine! Spring!

PAULA.

[*Glancing at the clock.*] Exactly six minutes.

AUBREY.

Six minutes?

PAULA.

Six minutes, Aubrey dear, since you made your last remark.

AUBREY.

I beg your pardon: I was reading my letters. Have you seen Ellean this morning?

PAULA.

[*Coldly*] Your last observation but one was about Ellean.

AUBREY.

Dearest, what shall I talk about?

PAULA.

Ellean breakfasted two hours ago, Morgan tells me, and then went out walking with her dog.

AUBREY.

She wraps up warmly, I hope; this sunshine is deceptive.

PAULA.

I ran about the lawn last night, after dinner, in satin shoes. Were you anxious about me?

AUBREY.

Certainly.

PAULA.

[*Melting.*] Really?

AUBREY.

You make me wretchedly anxious; you delight in doing incautious things. You are incurable.

PAULA.

Ah, what a beast I am! [*Going to him and kissing him, then glancing at the letters by his side.*] A letter from Cayley?

AUBREY.

He is staying very near here, with Mrs.—— Very near here.

PAULA.

With the lady whose chimneys we have the honour of contemplating from our windows?



AUBREY.

With Mrs. Cortelyon—yes.

PAULA.

Mrs. Cortelyon! The woman who might have set the example of calling on me when we first threw out roots in this deadly-lively soil! Deuce take Mrs. Cortelyon!

AUBREY.

Hush! my dear girl!

PAULA.

[*Returning to her seat.*] Oh, I know she's an old acquaintance of yours—and of the first Mrs. Tanqueray. And she joins the rest of 'em in slapping the second Mrs. Tanqueray in the face. However, I have my revenge—she's six-and-forty, and I wish nothing worse to happen to any woman.

AUBREY.

Well, she's going to town, Cayley says here, and his visit's at an end. He's coming over this morning to call on you. Shall we ask him to transfer himself to us? Do say yes.

PAULA.

Yes.

AUBREY.

[*Gladly.*] Ah, ha! old Cayley.

PAULA.

[*Coldly.*] He'll amuse *you.*

AUBREY.

And you too.

PAULA.

Because you find a companion, shall I be boisterously hilarious?

AUBREY.

Come, come! He talks London, and you know you like that.

PAULA.

London! London or Heaven! which is farther from me!

AUBREY.

Paula!

PAULA.

Oh! Oh, I am so bored, Aubrey!

AUBREY.

[*Gathering up his letters and going to her, leaning over her shoulder.*] Baby, what can I do for you?

PAULA.

I suppose, nothing. You have done all you can for me.

AUBREY.

What do you mean?

PAULA.

You have married me.

[*He walks away from her thoughtfully, to the writing table. As he places his letters on the table he sees an addressed letter, stamped for the post, lying on the blotting-book; he picks it up.*

AUBREY.

[*In an altered tone.*] You've been writing this morning before breakfast?

PAULA.

[*Looking at him quickly, then away again.*] Er—that letter.



AUBREY.

[*With the letter in his hand.*] To Lady Orreyed. Why?

PAULA.

Why not? Mabel's an old friend of mine.

AUBREY.

Are you—corresponding?

PAULA.

I heard from her yesterday. They've just returned from the Riviera. She seems happy.

AUBREY.

[*Sarcastically.*] That's good news.

PAULA.

Why are you always so cutting about Mabel? She's a kind-hearted girl. Everything's altered; she even thinks of letting her hair go back to brown. She's Lady Orreyed. She's married to George. What's the matter with her?

AUBREY.

[*Turning away.*] Oh!

PAULA.

You drive me mad sometimes with the tone you take about things! Great goodness, if you come to that, George Orreyed's wife isn't a bit worse than yours! [*He faces her suddenly.*] I suppose I needn't have made that observation.

AUBREY.

No, there was scarcely a necessity.

[*He throws the letter on to the table, and takes up the newspaper.*

PAULA.

I am very sorry.

AUBREY.

All right, dear.

PAULA.

[*Trifling with the letter.*] I—I'd better tell you what I've written. I meant to do so, of course. I—I've asked the Orreyeds to come and stay with us. [*He looks at her, and lets the paper fall to the ground in a helpless way.*] George was a great friend of Cayley's; I'm sure *he* would be delighted to meet them here.

AUBREY.

[*Laughing mirthlessly.*] Ha, ha, ha! They say Orreyed has taken to tippling at dinner. Heavens above!

PAULA.

Oh! I've no patience with you! You will kill me with this life! [*She selects some flowers from a vase on the table, cuts and arranges them, and fastens them in her bodice.*] What is my existence, Sunday to Saturday? In the morning, a drive down to the village, with a groom, to give my orders to the tradespeople. At lunch, you and Ellean. In the afternoon, a novel, the newspapers: if fine, another drive—*if* fine! Tea—you and Ellean. Then two hours of dusk; then dinner—you and Ellean. Then a game of Bésique, you and I, while Ellean reads a religious book in a dull corner. Then a yawn from me, another from you, a sigh from Ellean; three figures suddenly rise—"Good-night, good-night, good-night!" [*Imitating a kiss.*] "God bless you!" Ah!

AUBREY.

Yes, yes, Paula—yes, dearest—that's what it is *now*. But, by-and-bye, if people begin to come round us—



PAULA.

Hah! That's where we've made the mistake, my friend Aubrey! [*Pointing to the window.*] Do you believe these people will *ever* come round us? Your former crony, Mrs. Cortelyon? Or the grim old vicar, or that wife of his whose huge nose is positively indecent? Or the Ullathornes, or the Gollans, or Lady William Petres? I know better! And when the young ones gradually take the place of the old, there will still remain the sacred tradition that the dreadful person who lives at the top of the hill is never, under any circumstances, to be called upon! And so we shall go on here, year in and year out, until the sap is run out of our lives, and we're stale and dry and withered from sheer, solitary respectability. Upon my word, I wonder we didn't see that we should have been far happier if we'd gone in for the devil-may-care, *café*-living sort of life in town! After all, *I* have a set, and you might have joined it. It's true, I did want, dearly, dearly, to be a married woman, but where's the pride in being a married woman among married women who are—married! If— [*Seeing that* AUBREY'S *head has sunk into his hands.*] Aubrey! My dear boy! You're not—crying?

[*He looks up, with a flushed face.* ELLEAN *enters, dressed very simply for walking. She is a low-voiced, grave girl of about nineteen, with a face somewhat resembling a Madonna. Towards* PAULA *her manner is cold and distant.*

AUBREY.

[*In an undertone.*] Ellean!

ELLEAN.

Good-morning, papa. Good-morning, Paula.

[PAULA *puts her arms round* ELLEAN *and kisses her.* ELLEAN *makes little response.*

PAULA.

Good-morning. [*Brightly.*] We've been breakfasting this side of the house, to get the sun.

[*She sits at the piano and rattles at a gay melody. Seeing that* PAULA'S *back is turned to them,* ELLEAN *goes to* AUBREY *and kisses him; he returns the kiss almost furtively. As they separate, the servants re-enter, and proceed to carry out the breakfast table.*

AUBREY.

[*To* ELLEAN.] I guess where you've been: there's some gorse clinging to your frock.

ELLEAN.

[*Removing a sprig of gorse from her skirt.*] Rover and I walked nearly as far as Black Moor. The poor fellow has a thorn in his pad; I am going up-stairs for my tweezers.

AUBREY.

Ellean! [*She returns to him.*] Paula is a little depressed —out of sorts. She complains that she has no companion.

ELLEAN.

I am with Paula nearly all the day, papa.

AUBREY.

Ah, but you're such a little mouse. Paula likes cheerful people about her.

ELLEAN.

I'm afraid I am naturally rather silent; and it's so difficult to seem to be what one is not.

AUBREY.

I don't wish that, Ellean.



ELLEAN.

I will offer to go down to the village with Paula this morning—shall I?

AUBREY.

[*Touching her hand gently.*] Thank you—do.

ELLEAN.

When I've looked after Rover, I'll come back to her.

[*She goes out;* PAULA *ceases playing, and turns on the music-stool, looking at* AUBREY.

PAULA.

Well, have you and Ellean had your little confidence?

AUBREY.

Confidence?

PAULA.

Do you think I couldn't feel it, like a pain between my shoulders?

AUBREY.

Ellean is coming back in a few minutes to be with you. [*Bending over her.*] Paula, Paula dear, is this how you keep your promise?

PAULA.

Oh! [*Rising impatiently, and crossing swiftly to the settee, where she sits, moving restlessly.*] I *can't* keep my promise; I *am* jealous; it won't be smothered. I see you looking at her, watching her; your voice drops when you speak to her. I know how fond you are of that girl, Aubrey.

AUBREY.

What would you have? I've no other home for her. She is my daughter.



PAULA.

She is your saint. Saint Ellean!

AUBREY.

You have often told me how good and sweet you think her.

PAULA.

Good!—yes! Do you imagine *that* makes me less jealous? [*Going to him and clinging to his arm.*] Aubrey, there are two sorts of affection—the love for a woman you respect, and the love for the woman you—love. She gets the first from you: I never can.

AUBREY.

Hush, hush! you don't realise what you say.

PAULA.

If Ellean cared for me only a little, it would be different. I shouldn't be jealous then. Why doesn't she care for me?

AUBREY.

She—she—she will, in time.

PAULA.

You can't say that without stuttering.

AUBREY.

Her disposition seems a little unresponsive; she resembles her mother in many ways; I can see it every day.

PAULA.

She's marble. It's a shame. There's not the slightest excuse; for all she knows, I'm as much a saint as she—only married. Dearest, help me to win her over!



AUBREY.

Help you?

PAULA.

You can. Teach her that it is her duty to love me; she hangs on to every word you speak. I'm sure, Aubrey, that the love of a nice woman who believed me to be like herself would do me a world of good. You'd get the benefit of it as well as I. It would soothe me; it would make me less horribly restless; it would take this—this—mischievous feeling from me. [*Coaxingly.*] Aubrey!

AUBREY.

Have patience; everything will come right.

PAULA.

Yes, if you help me.

AUBREY.

In the meantime you will tear up your letter to Lady Orreyed, won't you?

PAULA.

[*Kissing his hand.*] Of course I will—anything!

AUBREY.

Ah, thank you, dearest! [*Laughing.*] Why, good gracious!—ha, ha!—just imagine "Saint Ellean" and that woman side by side!

PAULA.

[*Going back with a cry.*] Ah!

AUBREY.

What?

PAULA.

[*Passionately.*] It's Ellean you're considering, not me? It's all Ellean with you! Ellean! Ellean!

ELLEAN *re-enters.*

ELLEAN.

Did you call me, Paula? [*Clenching his hands,* AUBREY *turns away and goes out.*] Is papa angry?

PAULA.

I drive him distracted sometimes. There, I confess it!

ELLEAN.

Do you? Oh, why do you?

PAULA.

Because I—because I'm jealous.

ELLEAN.

Jealous?

PAULA.

Yes—of you. [ELLEAN *is silent.*] Well, what do you think of that?

ELLEAN.

I knew it; I've seen it. It hurts me dreadfully. What do you wish me to do? Go away?

PAULA.

Leave us! [*Beckoning her with a motion of the head.*] Look here! [ELLEAN *goes to* PAULA *slowly and unresponsively.*] You could cure me of my jealousy very easily. Why don't you—like me?

ELLEAN.

What do you mean by—like you? I don't understand.

PAULA.

Love me.

ELLEAN.

Love is not a feeling that is under one's control. I shall



alter as time goes on, perhaps. I didn't begin to love my father deeply till a few months ago, and then I obeyed my mother.

PAULA.

Ah, yes, you dream things, don't you—see them in your sleep? You fancy your mother speaks to you?

ELLEAN.

When you have lost your mother it is a comfort to believe that she is dead only to this life, that she still watches over her child. I do believe that of my mother.

PAULA.

Well, and so you haven't been bidden to love *me?*

ELLEAN.

[*After a pause, almost inaudibly.*] No.

PAULA.

Dreams are only a hash-up of one's day-thoughts, I suppose you know. Think intently of anything, and it's bound to come back to you at night. I don't cultivate dreams myself.

ELLEAN.

Ah, I knew you would only sneer!

PAULA.

I'm not sneering; I'm speaking the truth. I say that if you cared for me in the daytime I should soon make friends with those nightmares of yours. Ellean, why don't you try to look on me as your second mother? Of course there are not many years between us, but I'm ever so much older than you—in experience. I shall have no children of my own, I know that; it would be a real comfort to me if you would

make me feel we belonged to each other. Won't you? Perhaps you think I'm odd—not nice. Well, the fact is I've two sides to my nature, and I've let the one almost smother the other. A few years ago I went through some trouble, and since then I haven't shed a tear. I believe if you put your arms round me just once I should run up-stairs and have a good cry. There, I've talked to you as I've never talked to a woman in my life. Ellean, you seem to fear me. Don't! Kiss me!

[*With a cry, almost of despair,* ELLEAN *turns from* PAULA *and sinks on to the settee, covering her face with her hands.*

PAULA.

[*Indignantly.*] Oh! Why is it! How dare you treat me like this? What do you mean by it? What do you mean?

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT.

Mr. Drummle, ma'am.

CAYLEY DRUMMLE, *in riding-dress, enters briskly.*

The SERVANT *retires.*

PAULA.

[*Recovering herself.*] Well, Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

[*Shaking hands with her cordially.*] How are you? [*Shaking hands with* ELLEAN, *who rises.*] I saw you in the distance an hour ago, in the gorse near Stapleton's.

ELLEAN.

I didn't see you, Mr. Drummle.



DRUMMLE.

My dear Ellean, it is my experience that no charming young lady of nineteen ever does see a man of forty-five. [*Laughing.*] Ha, Ha!

ELLEAN.

[*Going to the door.*] Paula, papa wishes me to drive down to the village with you this morning. Do you care to take me?

PAULA.

[*Coldly.*] Oh, by all means. Pray tell Watts to balance the cart for three. [ELLEAN *goes out.*

DRUMMLE.

How's Aubrey?

PAULA.

Very well—when Ellean's about the house.

DRUMMLE.

And you? I needn't ask.

PAULA.

[*Walking away to the window.*] Oh, a dog's life, my dear Cayley, mine.

DRUMMLE.

Eh?

PAULA.

Doesn't that define a happy marriage? I'm sleek, well-kept, well-fed, never without a bone to gnaw and fresh straw to lie upon. [*Gazing out of the window.*] Oh, dear me!

DRUMMLE.

H'm! Well, I heartily congratulate you on your kennel. The view from the terrace here is superb.



PAULA.

Yes; I can see London.

DRUMMLE.

London! Not quite so far, surely?

PAULA.

I can. Also the Mediterranean, on a fine day. I wonder what Algiers looks like this morning from the sea! [*Impulsively.*] Oh, Cayley, do you remember those jolly times on board Peter Jarman's yacht when we lay off—? [*Stopping suddenly, seeing* DRUMMLE *staring at her.*] Good gracious! What are we talking about!

AUBREY *enters.*

AUBREY.

[*To* DRUMMLE.] Dear old chap! Has Paula asked you?

PAULA.

Not yet.

AUBREY.

We want you to come to us, now that you're leaving Mrs. Cortelyon—at once, to-day. Stay a month, as long as you please—eh, Paula?

PAULA.

As long as you can possibly endure it—do, Cayley.

DRUMMLE.

[*Looking at* AUBREY.] Delighted. [*To* PAULA.] Charming of you to have me.

PAULA.

My dear man, you're a blessing. I must telegraph to



London for more fish! A strange appetite to cater for! Something to do, to do, to do!

[*She goes out in a mood of almost childish delight.*

DRUMMLE.

[*Eyeing* AUBREY.] Well?

AUBREY.

[*With a wearied anxious look.*] Well, Cayley?

DRUMMLE.

How are you getting on?

AUBREY.

My position doesn't grow less difficult. I told you, when I met you last week, of this feverish, jealous attachment of Paula's for Ellean?

DRUMMLE.

Yes. I hardly know why, but I came to the conclusion that you don't consider it an altogether fortunate attachment.

AUBREY.

Ellean doesn't respond to it.

DRUMMLE.

These are early days. Ellean will warm towards your wife by-an-bye.

AUBREY.

Ah, but there's the question, Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

What question?

AUBREY.

The question which positively distracts me. Ellean is

so different from—most women; I don't believe a purer creature exists out of heaven. And I—I ask myself, am I doing right in exposing her to the influence of poor Paula's light, careless nature?

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey!

AUBREY.

That shocks you! So it does me. I assure you I long to urge my girl to break down the reserve which keeps her apart from Paula, but somehow I can't do it—well, I don't do it. How can I make you understand? But when you come to us you'll understand quickly enough. Cayley, there's hardly a subject you can broach on which poor Paula hasn't some strange, out-of-the-way thought to give utterance to; some curious, warped notion. They are not mere worldly thoughts—unless, good God! they belong to the little hellish world which our blackguardism has created: no, her ideas have too little calculation in them to be called worldly. But it makes it the more dreadful that such thoughts should be ready, spontaneous; that expressing them has become a perfectly natural process; that her words, acts even, have almost lost their proper significance for her, and seem beyond her control. Ah, and the pain of listening to it all from the woman one loves, the woman one hoped to make happy and contented, who is really and truly a good woman, as it were, maimed! Well, this is my burden, and I shouldn't speak to you of it but for my anxiety about Ellean. Ellean! What is to be her future? It is in my hands; what am I to do? Cayley, when I remember how Ellean comes to me, from another world I always think,—when I realise the charge that's laid on me, I find myself wishing, in a sort of terror, that my child were safe under the ground!

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey, aren't you making a mistake?



AUBREY.

Very likely. What is it?

DRUMMLE.

A mistake, not in regarding your Ellean as an angel, but in believing that, under any circumstances, it would be possible for her to go through life without getting her white robe—shall we say, a little dusty at the hem? Don't take me for a cynic. I am sure there are many women upon earth who are almost divinely innocent; but being on earth, they must send their robes to the laundry occasionally. Ah, and it's right that they should have to do so, for what can they learn from the checking of their little washing-bills but lessons of charity? Now I see but two courses open to you for the disposal of your angel.

AUBREY.

Yes?

DRUMMLE.

You must either restrict her to a paradise which is, like every earthly paradise, necessarily somewhat imperfect, or treat her as an ordinary flesh-and-blood young woman, and give her the advantages of that society to which she properly belongs.

AUBREY.

Advantages?

DRUMMLE.

My dear Aubrey, of all forms of innocence mere ignorance is the least admirable. Take my advice, let her walk and talk and suffer and be healed with the great crowd. Do it, and hope that she'll some day meet a good, honest fellow who'll make her life complete, happy, secure. Now you see what I'm driving at.

AUBREY.

A sanguine programme, my dear Cayley! Oh, I'm not

pooh-poohing it. Putting sentiment aside, of course I know that a fortunate marriage for Ellean would be the best—perhaps the only—solution of my difficulty. But you forget the danger of the course you suggest.

DRUMMLE.

Danger?

AUBREY.

If Ellean goes among men and women, how can she escape from learning, sooner or later, the history of—poor Paula's—old life?

DRUMMLE.

H'm! You remember the episode of the Jeweller's Son in the Arabian Nights? Of course you don't. Well, if your daughter lives, she *can't* escape—what you're afraid of. [AUBREY *gives a half-stifled exclamation of pain.*] And when she does hear the story, surely it would be better that she should have some knowledge of the world to help her to understand it.

AUBREY.

To understand!

DRUMMLE.

To understand, to—philosophise.

AUBREY.

To philosophise?

DRUMMLE.

Philosophy is toleration, and it is only one step from toleration to forgiveness.

AUBREY.

You're right, Cayley; I believe you always are. Yes, yes. But, even if I had the courage to attempt to solve the problem of Ellean's future in this way, I—I'm helpless.



DRUMMLE.

How?

AUBREY.

What means have I now of placing my daughter in the world I've left?

DRUMMLE.

Oh, some friend—some woman friend.

AUBREY.

I have none; they're gone.

DRUMMLE.

You're wrong there; I know one—

AUBREY.

[*Listening.*] That's Paula's cart. Let's discuss this again.

DRUMMLE.

[*Going up to the window and looking out.*] It isn't the dog-cart. [*Turning to* AUBREY.] I hope you'll forgive me, old chap.

AUBREY.

What for?

DRUMMLE.

Whose wheels do you think have been cutting ruts in your immaculate drive?

A SERVANT *enters.*

SERVANT.

[*To* AUBREY.] Mrs. Cortelyon, sir.

AUBREY.

Mrs. Cortelyon! [*After a short pause.*] Very well.



[*The* SERVANT *withdraws.*] What on earth is the meaning of this?

DRUMMLE.

Ahem! While I've been our old friend's guest, Aubrey, we have very naturally talked a good deal about you and yours.

AUBREY.

Indeed, have you?

DRUMMLE.

Yes; and Alice Cortelyon has arrived at the conclusion that it would have been far kinder had she called on Mrs. Tanqueray long ago. She's going abroad for Easter before settling down in London for the season, and I believe she has come over this morning to ask for Ellean's companionship.

AUBREY.

Oh, I see! [*Frowning.*] Quite a friendly little conspiracy, my dear Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

Conspiracy! Not at all, I assure you. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha!

[ELLEAN *enters from the hall with* MRS. CORTELYON, *a handsome, good-humoured, spirited woman of about forty-five.*

ELLEAN.

Papa—

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* AUBREY, *shaking hands with him heartily.*] Well, Aubrey, how are you? I've just been telling this great girl of yours that I knew her when she was a sad-faced, pale baby. How is Mrs. Tanqueray? I have been a bad neighbour, and I'm here to beg forgiveness. Is she indoors?



AUBREY.

She's up-stairs putting on a hat, I believe.

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Sitting comfortably.*] Ah! [*She looks round:* DRUMMLE *and* ELLEAN *are talking together in the hall.*] We used to be very frank with each other, Aubrey. I suppose the old footing is no longer possible, eh?

AUBREY.

If so, I'm not entirely to blame, Mrs. Cortelyon.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Mrs. Cortelyon? H'm! No, I admit it. But you must make some little allowances for me, *Mr. Tanqueray.* Your first wife and I, as girls, were like two cherries on one stalk, and then I was the confidential friend of your married life. That post, perhaps, wasn't altogether a sinecure. And now—well, when a woman gets to my age I suppose she's a stupid, prejudiced, conventional creature. However, I've got over it and—[*giving him her hand*]—I hope you'll be enormously happy and let me be a friend once more.

AUBREY.

Thank you, Alice.

MRS. CORTELYON.

That's right. I feel more cheerful than I've done for weeks. But I suppose it would serve me right if the second Mrs. Tanqueray showed me the door. Do you think she will?

AUBREY.

[*Listening.*] Here is my wife. [MRS. CORTELYON *rises, and* PAULA *enters, dressed for driving; she stops*

abruptly on seeing MRS. CORTELYON.] Paula, dear, Mrs. Cortelyon has called to see you.

[PAULA *starts, looks at* MRS. CORTELYON *irresolutely, then after a slight pause barely touches* MRS. CORTELYON'S *extended hand.*

PAULA.

[*Whose manner now alternates between deliberate insolence and assumed sweetness.*] Mrs.——? What name, Aubrey?

AUBREY.

Mrs. Cortelyon.

PAULA.

Cortelyon? Oh, yes. Cortelyon.

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Carefully guarding herself throughout against any expression of resentment.*] Aubrey ought to have told you that Alice Cortelyon and he are very old friends.

PAULA.

Oh, very likely he has mentioned the circumstance. I have quite a wretched memory.

MRS. CORTELYON.

You know we are neighbours, Mrs. Tanqueray.

PAULA.

Neighbours? Are we really? Won't you sit down? [*They both sit.*] Neighbours! That's most interesting!

MRS. CORTELYON.

Very near neighbours. You can see my roof from your windows.



PAULA.

I fancy I *have* observed a roof. But you have been away from home; you have only just returned.

MRS. CORTELYON.

I? What makes you think that?

PAULA.

Why, because it is two months since we came to Higher-coombe, and I don't remember your having called.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Your memory is now terribly accurate. No, I've not been away from home, and it is to explain my neglect that I am here, rather unceremoniously, this morning.

PAULA.

Oh, to explain—quite so. [*With mock solicitude.*] Ah, you've been very ill; I ought to have seen that before.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Ill!

PAULA.

You look dreadfully pulled down. We poor women show illness so plainly in our faces, don't we?

AUBREY.

[*Anxiously.*] Paula dear, Mrs. Cortelyon is the picture of health.

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*With some asperity.*] I have never *felt* better in my life.

PAULA.

[*Looking round innocently.*] Have I said anything awk-

ward? Aubrey, tell Mrs. Cortelyon how stupid and thoughtless I always am!

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* DRUMMLE, *who is now standing close to her.*] Really, Cayley—! [*He soothes her with a nod and smile and a motion of his finger to his lip.*] Mrs. Tanqueray, I am afraid my explanation will not be quite so satisfactory as either of those you have just helped me to. You may have heard—but, if you have heard, you have doubtless forgotten—that twenty years ago, when your husband first lived here, I was a constant visitor at Highercoombe.

PAULA.

Twenty years ago—fancy! I was a naughty little child then.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Possibly. Well, at that time, and till the end of her life, my affections were centered upon the lady of this house.

PAULA.

Were they? That was very sweet of you.

[ELLEAN *approaches* MRS. CORTELYON, *listening intently to her.*

MRS. CORTELYON.

I will say no more on that score, but I must add this: when, two months ago, you came here, I realised, perhaps for the first time, that I was a middle-aged woman, and that it had become impossible for me to accept without some effort a breaking-in upon many tender associations. There, Mrs. Tanqueray, that is my confession. Will you try to understand it and pardon me?

PAULA.

[*Watching* ELLEAN,—*sneeringly.*] Ellean dear, you appear to be very interested in Mrs. Cortelyon's reminiscences;



I don't think I can do better than make you my mouthpiece —there is such sympathy between us. What do you say—can we bring ourselves to forgive Mrs. Cortelyon for neglecting us for two weary months?

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* ELLEAN, *pleasantly.*] Well, Ellean? [*With a little cry of tenderness* ELLEAN *impulsively sits beside* MRS. CORTELYON *and takes her hand.*] My dear child.

PAULA.

[*In an undertone to* AUBREY.] Ellean isn't so very slow in taking to Mrs. Cortelyon!

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* PAULA *and* AUBREY.] Come, this encourages me to broach my scheme. Mrs. Tanqueray, it strikes me that you two good people are just now excellent company for each other, while Ellean would perhaps be glad of a little peep into the world you are anxious to avoid. Now, I'm going to Paris to-morrow for a week or two before settling down in Chester Square, so—don't gasp, both of you!—if this girl is willing, and you have made no other arrangements for her, will you let her come with me to Paris, and afterwards remain with me in town during the season? [ELLEAN *utters an exclamation of surprise.* PAULA *is silent.*] What do you say?

AUBREY.

Paula—Paula dear. [*Hesitatingly.*] My dear Mrs. Cortelyon, this is wonderfully kind of you; I am really at a loss to—eh, Cayley?

DRUMMLE.

[*Watching* PAULA *apprehensively.*] Kind! Now I must say I don't think so! I begged Alice to take *me* to Paris, and she declined. I am thrown over for Ellean! Ha! ha!

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Laughing.*] What nonsense you talk, Cayley!

[*The laughter dies out.* PAULA *remains quite still.*

AUBREY.

Paula dear.

PAULA.

[*Slowly collecting herself.*] One moment. I—I don't quite— [*To* MRS. CORTELYON.] You propose that Ellean leaves Highercoombe almost at once, and remains with you some months?

MRS. CORTELYON.

It would be a mercy to me. You can afford to be generous to a desolate old widow. Come, Mrs. Tanqueray, won't you spare her?

PAULA.

Won't *I* spare her. [*Suspiciously.*] Have you mentioned your plan to Aubrey—before I came in?

MRS. CORTELYON.

No; I had no opportunity.

PAULA.

Nor to Ellean?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Oh, no.

PAULA.

[*Looking about her in suppressed excitement.*] This hasn't been discussed at all, behind my back?

MRS. CORTELYON.

My dear Mrs. Tanqueray!

PAULA.

Ellean, let us hear your voice in the matter!



ELLEAN.

I should like to go with Mrs. Cortelyon—

PAULA.

Ah!

ELLEAN.

That is, if—if—

PAULA.

If—what?

ELLEAN.

[*Looking towards* AUBREY, *appealingly.*] Papa!

PAULA.

[*In a hard voice.*] Oh, of course—I forgot. [*To* AUBREY.] My dear Aubrey, it rests with you, naturally, whether I am—to lose—Ellean.

AUBREY.

Lose Ellean! [*Advancing to* PAULA.] There is no question of losing Ellean. You would see Ellean in town constantly when she returned from Paris; isn't that so, Mrs. Cortelyon?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Certainly.

PAULA.

[*Laughing softly.*] Oh, I didn't know I should be allowed that privilege.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Privilege, my dear Mrs. Tanqueray!

PAULA.

Ha, ha! that makes all the difference, doesn't it?

AUBREY.

[*With assumed gaiety.*] All the difference? I should think so! [*To* ELLEAN, *laying his hand upon her head tenderly.*] And you are quite certain you wish to see what the world is like on the other side of Black Moor!

ELLEAN.

If you are willing, papa, I am quite certain.

AUBREY.

[*Looking at* PAULA *irresolutely, then speaking with an effort.*] Then I—I am willing.

PAULA.

[*Rising and striking the table lightly with her clenched hand.*] That decides it! [*There is a general movement. Excitedly to* MRS. CORTELYON, *who advances towards her.*] When do you want her?

MRS. CORTELYON.

We go to town this afternoon at five o'clock, and sleep to-night at Bayliss's. There is barely time for her to make her preparations.

PAULA.

I will undertake that she is ready.

MRS. CORTELYON.

I've a great deal to scramble through at home too, as you may guess. Good-bye!

PAULA.

[*Turning away.*] Mrs. Cortelyon is going.

[PAULA *stands looking out of the window, with her back to those in the room.*



MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* DRUMMLE.] Cayley—

DRUMMLE.

[*To her.*] Eh?

MRS. CORTELYON.

I've gone through it, for the sake of Aubrey and his child, but I—I feel a hundred. Is that a mad-woman?

DRUMMLE.

Of course; all jealous women are mad.

[*He goes out with* AUBREY.

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Hesitatingly, to* PAULA.] Good-bye, Mrs. Tanqueray.

[PAULA *inclines her head with the slightest possible movement, then resumes her former position.* ELLEAN *comes from the hall and takes* MRS. CORTELYON *out of the room. After a brief silence,* PAULA *turns with a fierce cry, and hurriedly takes off her coat and hat, and tosses them upon the settee.*

PAULA.

Who's that? Oh! Oh! Oh!

[*She drops into the chair as* AUBREY *returns; he stands looking at her.*

AUBREY.

I—you have altered your mind about going out?

PAULA.

Yes. Please to ring the bell.

AUBREY.

[*Touching the bell.*] You are angry about Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean. Let me try to explain my reasons—

PAULA.

Be careful what you say to be just now! I have never felt like this—except once—in my life. Be careful what you say to me!

A SERVANT *enters.*

PAULA.

[*Rising.*] Is Watts at the door with the cart?

SERVANT.

Yes, ma'am.

PAULA.

Tell him to drive down to the post-office directly with this.

[*Picking up the letter which has been lying upon the table.*

AUBREY.

With that?

PAULA.

Yes. My letter to Lady Orreyed.

[*Giving the letter to the* SERVANT, *who goes out.*

AUBREY.

Surely you don't wish me to countermand any order of yours to a servant? Call the man back—take the letter from him!

PAULA.

I have not the slightest intention of doing so.



AUBREY.

I must, then. [*Going to the door. She snatches up her hat and coat and follows him.*] What are you going to do?

PAULA.

If you stop that letter, I walk out of the house.

[*He hesitates, then leaves the door.*

AUBREY.

I am right in believing that to be the letter inviting George Orreyed and his wife to stay here, am I not?

PAULA.

Oh, yes—quite right.

AUBREY.

Let it go; I'll write to him by-and-bye.

PAULA.

[*Facing him.*] You dare!

AUBREY.

Hush, Paula!

PAULA.

Insult me again and, upon my word, I'll go straight out of the house!

AUBREY.

Insult you?

PAULA.

Insult me! What else is it? My God! what else is it? What do you mean by taking Ellean from me?

AUBREY.

Listen—!



PAULA.

Listen to *me!* And how do you take her? You pack her off in the care of a woman who has deliberately held aloof from me, who's thrown mud at me! Yet this Cortelyon creature has only to put foot here once to be entrusted with the charge of the girl you know I dearly want to keep near me!

AUBREY.

Paula dear! hear me—!

PAULA.

Ah! of course, of course! I can't be so useful to your daughter as such people as this; and so I'm to be given the go-by for any town friend of yours who turns up and chooses to patronise us! Hah! Very well, at any rate, as you take Ellean from me you justify my looking for companions where I can most readily find 'em.

AUBREY.

You wish me to fully appreciate your reason for sending that letter to Lady Orreyed?

PAULA.

Precisely—I do.

AUBREY.

And could you, after all, go back to associates of that order? It's not possible!

PAULA.

[*Mockingly.*] What, not after the refining influence of these intensely respectable surroundings? [*Going to the door.*] We'll see!



AUBREY.

Paula!

PAULA.

[*Violently.*] We'll see!

[*She goes out. He stands still looking after her.*



THE THIRD ACT

The drawing-room at "Highercoombe." Facing the spectator are two large French windows, sheltered by a verandah, leading into the garden; on the right is a door opening into a small hall. The fireplace, with a large mirror above it, is on the left-hand side of the room, and higher up in the same wall are double doors recessed. The room is richly furnished, and everything betokens taste and luxury. The windows are open, and there is moonlight in the garden.

LADY ORREYED, *a pretty, affected doll of a woman, with a mincing voice and flaxen hair, is sitting on the ottoman, her head resting against the drum, and her eyes closed.* PAULA, *looking pale, worn, and thoroughly unhappy, is sitting at a table. Both are in sumptuous dinner-gowns.*

LADY ORREYED.

[*Opening her eyes.*] Well, I never! I dropped off! [*Feeling her hair.*] Just fancy! Where are the men?

PAULA.

[*Icily.*] Outside, smoking.

[*A* SERVANT *enters with coffee, which he hands to* LADY ORREYED. SIR GEORGE ORREYED *comes in by the window. He is a man of about thirty-five, with a low forehead, a receding chin, a vacuous expression, and an ominous redness about the nose.*

LADY ORREYED.

[*Taking coffee.*] Here's Dodo.



SIR GEORGE.

I say, the flies under the verandah make you swear. [*The* SERVANT *hands coffee to* PAULA, *who declines it, then to* SIR GEORGE, *who takes a cup.*] Hi! wait a bit! [*He looks at the tray searchingly, then puts back his cup.*] Never mind. [*Quietly to* LADY ORREYED.] I say, they're dooced sparin' with their liqueur, ain't they?

[*The* SERVANT *goes out at window.*

PAULA.

[*To* SIR GEORGE.] Won't you take coffee, George?

SIR GEORGE.

No, thanks. It's gettin' near time for a whiskey and potass. [*Approaching* PAULA, *regarding* LADY ORREYED *admiringly.*] I say, Birdie looks rippin' to-night, don't she?

PAULA.

Your wife?

SIR GEORGE.

Yaas—Birdie.

PAULA.

Rippin'?

SIR GEORGE.

Yaas.

PAULA.

Quite—quite rippin'.

[*He moves round to the settee.* PAULA *watches him with distaste, then rises and walks away.* SIR GEORGE *falls asleep on the settee.*

LADY ORREYED.

Paula love, I fancied you and Aubrey were a little more friendly at dinner. You haven't made it up, have you?



PAULA.

We? Oh, no. We speak before others, that's all.

LADY ORREYED.

And how long do you intend to carry on this game, dear?

PAULA.

[*Turning away impatiently.*] I really can't tell you.

LADY ORREYED.

Sit down, old girl; don't be so fidgety. [PAULA *sits on the upper seat of the ottoman, with her back to* LADY ORREYED.] Of course, it's my duty, as an old friend, to give you a good talking-to—[PAULA *glares at her suddenly and fiercely*]—but really I've found one gets so many smacks in the face through interfering in matrimonial squabbles that I've determined to drop it.

PAULA.

I think you're wise.

LADY ORREYED.

However, I must say that I do wish you'd look at marriage in a more solemn light—just as I do, in fact. It is such a beautiful thing—marriage, and if people in our position don't respect it, and set a good example by living happily with their husbands, what can you expect from the middle classes? When did this sad state of affairs between you and Aubrey actually begin?

PAULA.

Actually, a fortnight and three days ago; I haven't calculated the minutes.

LADY ORREYED.

A day or two before Dodo and I turned up—arrived.



PAULA.

Yes. One always remembers one thing by another; we left off speaking to each other the morning I wrote asking you to visit us.

LADY ORREYED.

Lucky for you I was able to pop down, wasn't it, dear?

PAULA.

[*Glaring at her again.*] Most fortunate.

LADY ORREYED.

A serious split with your husband without a pal on the premises—I should say, without a friend in the house—would be most unpleasant.

PAULA.

[*Turning to her abruptly.*] This place must be horribly doleful for you and George just now. At least you ought to consider him before me. Why didn't you leave me to my difficulties?

LADY ORREYED.

Oh, we're quite comfortable, dear, thank you—both of us. George and me are so wrapped up in each other, it doesn't matter where we are. I don't want to crow over you, old girl, but I've got a perfect husband.

[SIR GEORGE *is now fast asleep, his head thrown back and his mouth open, looking hideous.*

PAULA.

[*Glancing at* SIR GEORGE.] So you've given me to understand.

LADY ORREYED.

Not that we don't have our little differences. Why, we fell out only this very morning. You remember the

diamond and ruby tiara Charley Prestwick gave poor dear Connie Tirlemont years ago, don't you?

PAULA.

No, I do not.

LADY ORREYED.

No? Well, it's in the market. Benjamin of Piccadilly has got it in his shop window, and I've set my heart on it.

PAULA.

You consider it quite necessary?

LADY ORREYED.

Yes; because what I say to Dodo is this—a lady of my station must smother herself with hair ornaments. It's different with you, love—people don't look for so much blaze from you, but I've got rank to keep up; haven't I?

PAULA.

Yes.

LADY ORREYED.

Well, that was the cause of the little set-to between I and Dodo this morning. He broke two chairs, he was in such a rage. I forgot they're your chairs; do you mind?

PAULA.

No.

LADY ORREYED.

You know, poor Dodo can't lose his temper without smashing something; if it isn't a chair, it's a mirror; if it isn't that, it's china—a bit of Dresden for choice. Dear old pet! he loves a bit of Dresden when he's furious. He doesn't really throw things *at* me, dear; he simply lifts them up and drops them, like a gentleman. I expect our room upstairs will look rather wrecky before I get that tiara.



PAULA.

Excuse the suggestion; perhaps your husband can't afford it.

LADY ORREYED.

Oh, how dreadfully changed you are, Paula! Dodo can always mortgage something, or borrow of his ma. What *is* coming to you!

PAULA.

Ah. [*She sits at the piano and touches the keys.*

LADY ORREYED.

Oh, yes, do play! That's the one thing I envy you for.

PAULA.

What shall I play?

LADY ORREYED.

What was that heavenly piece you gave us last night, dear?

PAULA.

A bit of Schubert. Would you like to hear it again?

LADY ORREYED.

You don't know any comic songs, do you?

PAULA

I'm afraid not.

LADY ORREYED

I leave it to you.

[PAULA *plays.* AUBREY *and* CAYLEY DRUMMLE *appear outside the window; they look into the room.*

AUBREY.

[*To* DRUMMLE.] You can see her face in that mirror. Poor girl, how ill and wretched she looks.



DRUMMLE.

When are the Orreyeds going?

AUBREY.

Heaven knows! [*Entering the room.*

DRUMMLE.

But *you're* entertaining them; what's it to do with heaven? [*Following* AUBREY.

AUBREY.

Do you know, Cayley, that even the Orreyeds serve a useful purpose? My wife actually speaks to me before our guests—think of that! I've come to rejoice at the presence of the Orreyeds!

DRUMMLE.

I dare say; we're taught that beetles are sent for a benign end.

AUBREY.

Cayley, talk to Paula again to-night.

DRUMMLE.

Certainly, if I get the chance.

AUBREY.

Let's contrive it. George is asleep; perhaps I can get that doll out of the way. [*As they advance into the room,* PAULA *abruptly ceases playing and finds interest in a volume of music.* SIR GEORGE *is now nodding and snoring apoplectically.*] Lady Orreyed, whenever you feel inclined for a game of billiards I'm at your service.

LADY ORREYED.

[*Jumping up.*] Charmed, I'm sure! I really thought you'd forgotten poor little me. Oh, look at Dodo!



AUBREY.

No, no, don't wake him; he's tired.

LADY ORREYED.

I must, he looks so plain. [*Rousing* SIR GEORGE.] Dodo! Dodo!

SIR GEORGE.

[*Stupidly.*] 'Ullo!

LADY ORREYED.

Dodo dear, you were snoring.

SIR GEORGE.

Oh, I say, you could 'a told me that by-and-bye.

AUBREY.

You want a cigar, George; come into the billiard-room. [*Giving his arm to* LADY ORREYED.] Cayley, bring Paula.

[AUBREY *and* LADY ORREYED *go out.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*Rising.*] Hey, what! Billiard-room! [*Looking at his watch.*] How goes the—? Phew! 'Ullo, 'Ullo! Whiskey and potass!

[*He goes rapidly after* AUBREY *and* LADY ORREYED. PAULA *resumes playing.*

PAULA.

[*After a pause.*] Don't moon about after me, Cayley; follow the others.

DRUMMLE.

Thanks, by-and-bye. [*Sitting.*] That's pretty.

PAULA.

[*After another pause, still playing.*] I wish you wouldn't stare so.

DRUMMLE.

Was I staring? I'm sorry. [*She plays a little longer, then stops suddenly, rises, and goes to the window, where she stands looking out.* DRUMMLE *moves from the ottoman to the settee.*] A lovely night.

PAULA.

[*Startled.*] Oh! [*Without turning to him.*] Why do you hop about like a monkey?

DRUMMLE.

Hot rooms play the deuce with the nerves. Now, it would have done you good to have walked in the garden with us after dinner and made merry. Why didn't you?

PAULA.

You know why.

DRUMMLE.

Ah, you're thinking of the—difference between you and Aubrey?

PAULA.

Yes, I *am* thinking of it.

DRUMMLE.

Well, so am I. How long—?

PAULA.

Getting on for three weeks.

DRUMMLE.

Bless me, it must be! And this would have been such a night to have healed it! Moonlight, the stars, the scent



of flowers; and yet enough darkness to enable a kind woman to rest her hand for an instant on the arm of a good fellow who loves her. Ah, ha! It's a wonderful power, dear Mrs. Aubrey, the power of an offended woman! Only realise it! Just that one touch—the mere tips of her fingers—and, for herself and another, she changes the colour of the whole world.

PAULA.

[*Turning to him calmly.*] Cayley, my dear man, you talk exactly like a very romantic old lady.

[*She leaves the window and sits playing with the knick-knacks on the table.*

DRUMMLE.

[*To himself.*] H'm, that hasn't done it! Well—ha, ha!—I accept the suggestion. An old woman, eh?

PAULA.

Oh, I didn't intend—

DRUMMLE.

But why not? I've every qualification—well, almost. And I confess it would have given this withered bosom a throb of grandmotherly satisfaction if I could have seen you and Aubrey at peace before I take my leave to-morrow.

PAULA.

To-morrow, Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

I must.

PAULA.

Oh, this house is becoming unendurable.

DRUMMLE.

You're very kind. But you've got the Orreyeds.



PAULA.

[*Fiercely.*] The Orreyeds! I—I hate the Orreyeds! I lie awake at night, hating them!

DRUMMLE.

Pardon me, I've understood that their visit is, in some degree, owing to—hem—your suggestion.

PAULA.

Heavens! that doesn't make me like them better. Somehow or another, I—I've outgrown these people. This woman—I used to think her "jolly!"—sickens me. I can't breathe when she's near me: the whiff of her handkerchief turns me faint! And she patronises me by the hour, until I—I feel my nails growing longer with every word she speaks!

DRUMMLE.

My dear lady, why on earth don't you say all this to Aubrey?

PAULA.

Oh, I've been such an utter fool, Cayley!

DRUMMLE.

[*Soothingly.*] Well, well, mention it to Aubrey!

PAULA.

No, no, you don't understand. What do you think I've done?

DRUMMLE.

Done! What, *since* you invited the Orreyeds?

PAULA.

Yes; I must tell you—



DRUMMLE.

Perhaps you'd better not.

PAULA.

Look here! I've intercepted some letters from Mrs. Cortelyon and Ellean to—him. [*Producing three unopened letters from the bodice of her dress.*] There are the accursed things! From Paris—two from the Cortelyon woman, the other from Ellean!

DRUMMLE.

But why—why?

PAULA.

I don't know. Yes, I do! I saw letters coming from Ellean to her father; not a line to me—not a line. And one morning it happened I was downstairs before he was, and I spied this one lying with his heap on the breakfast-table, and I slipped it into my pocket—out of malice, Cayley, pure deviltry! And a day or two afterwards I met Elwes the postman at the Lodge, and took the letters from him, and found these others amongst 'em. I felt simply fiendish when I saw them—fiendish! [*Returning the letters to her bodice.*] And now I carry them about with me, and they're scorching me like a mustard plaster!

DRUMMLE.

Oh, this accounts for Aubrey not hearing from Paris lately!

PAULA.

That's an ingenious conclusion to arrive at! Of course it does! [*With an hysterical laugh.*] Ha, ha!

DRUMMLE.

Well, well! [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

PAULA.

[*Turning upon him.*] I suppose it *is* amusing!

DRUMMLE.

I beg pardon.

PAULA.

Heaven knows I've little enough to brag about! I'm a bad lot, but not in mean tricks of this sort. In all my life this is the most caddish thing I've done. How am I to get rid of these letters—that's what I want to know? How am I to get rid of them?

DRUMMLE.

If I were you I should take Aubrey aside and put them into his hands as soon as possible.

PAULA.

What! and tell him to his face that I—! No, thank you. I suppose *you* wouldn't like to—

DRUMMLE.

No, no; I won't touch 'em!

PAULA.

And you call yourself my friend?

DRUMMLE.

[*Good-humouredly.*] No, I don't!

PAULA.

Perhaps I'll tie them together and give them to his man in the morning.

DRUMMLE.

That won't avoid an explanation.



PAULA.

[*Recklessly.*] Oh, then he must miss them—

DRUMMLE.

And trace them.

PAULA.

[*Throwing herself upon the ottoman.*] I don't care!

DRUMMLE.

I know you don't; but let me send him to you now, may I?

PAULA.

Now! What do you think a woman's made of? I couldn't stand it, Cayley. I haven't slept for nights; and last night there was thunder, too! I believe I've got the horrors.

DRUMMLE.

[*Taking the little hand-mirror from the table.*] You'll sleep well enough when you deliver those letters. Come, come, Mrs. Aubrey—a good night's rest! [*Holding the mirror before her face.*] It's quite time.

[*She looks at herself for a moment, then snatches the mirror from him.*

PAULA.

You brute, Cayley, to show me that!

DRUMMLE.

Then—may I? Be guided by a fr—a poor old woman! May I?

PAULA.

You'll kill me, amongst you!

DRUMMLE.

What do you say?



PAULA.

[*After a pause.*] Very well. [*He nods his head and goes out rapidly. She looks after him for a moment, and calls "Cayley! Cayley!" Then she again produces the letters, deliberately, one by one, fingering them with aversion. Suddenly she starts, turning her head towards the door.*] Ah!

AUBREY *enters quickly.*

AUBREY.

Paula!

PAULA.

[*Handing him the letters, her face averted.*] There! [*He examines the letters, puzzled, and looks at her enquiringly.*] They are many days old. I stole them, I suppose to make you anxious and unhappy.

[*He looks at the letters again, then lays them aside on the table.*

AUBREY.

[*Gently.*] Paula, dear, it doesn't matter.

PAULA.

[*After a short pause.*] Why—why do you take it like this?

AUBREY.

What did you expect?

PAULA.

Oh, but I suppose silent reproaches are really the severest. And then, naturally, you are itching to open your letters.

[*She crosses the room as if to go.*

AUBREY.

Paula! [*She pauses.*] Surely, surely, it's all over now?



PAULA.

All over! [*Mockingly.*] Has my step-daughter returned then? When did she arrive? I haven't heard of it!

AUBREY.

You can be very cruel.

PAULA.

That word's always on a man's lips; he uses it if his soup's cold. [*With another movement as if to go.*] Need we—

AUBREY.

I know I've wounded you, Paula? But isn't there any way out of this?

PAULA.

When does Ellean return? To-morrow? Next week?

AUBREY.

[*Wearily.*] Oh! Why should we grudge Ellean the little pleasure she is likely to find in Paris and in London.

PAULA.

I grudge her nothing, if that's a hit at me. But with that woman—?

AUBREY.

It must be that woman or another. You know that at present we are unable to give Ellean the opportunity of—of—

PAULA.

Of mixing with respectable people.

AUBREY.

The opportunity of gaining friends, experience, ordinary

knowledge of the world. If you are interested in Ellean, can't you see how useful Mrs. Cortelyon's good offices are?

PAULA.

May I put one question? At the end of the London season, when Mrs. Cortelyon has done with Ellean, is it quite understood that the girl comes back to us? [AUBREY *is silent.*] Is it? Is it?

AUBREY.

Let us wait till the end of the season—

PAULA.

Oh! I knew it. You're only fooling me; you put me off with any trash. I believe you've sent Ellean away, not for the reasons you give, but because you don't consider me a decent companion for her, because you're afraid she might get a little of her innocence rubbed off in my company? Come, isn't that the truth? Be honest! Isn't that it?

AUBREY.

Yes. [*There is a moment's silence on both sides.*

PAULA.

[*With uplifted hands as if to strike him.*] Oh!

AUBREY.

[*Taking her by the wrists.*] Sit down. Sit down. [*He puts her into a chair; she shakes herself free with a cry.*] Now listen to me. Fond as you are, Paula, of harking back to your past, there's one chapter of it you always let alone. I've never asked you to speak of it; you've never offered to speak of it. I mean the chapter that relates to the time when you were—like Ellean. [*She attempts to rise; he restrains her.*] No, no.



PAULA.

I don't choose to talk about that time. I won't satisfy your curiosity.

AUBREY.

My dear Paula, I have no curiosity—I know what you were at Ellean's age. I'll tell you. You hadn't a thought that wasn't a wholesome one, you hadn't an impulse that didn't tend towards good, you never harboured a notion you couldn't have gossiped about to a parcel of children. [*She makes another effort to rise: he lays his hand lightly on her shoulder.*] And this was a very few years back—there are days now when you look like a school-girl—but think of the difference between the two Paulas. You'll have to think hard, because after a cruel life, one's perceptions grow a thick skin. But, for God's sake, do think till you get these two images clearly in your mind, and then ask yourself what sort of a friend such a woman as you are to-day would have been for the girl of seven or eight years ago.

PAULA.

[*Rising.*] How dare you? I could be almost as good a friend to Ellean as her own mother would have been had she lived. I know what you mean. How dare you?

AUBREY.

You say that; very likely you believe it. But you're blind, Paula; you're blind. You! Every belief that a young, pure-minded girl holds sacred—that you once held sacred—you now make a target for a jest, a sneer, a paltry cynicism. I tell you, you're not mistress any longer of your thoughts or your tongue. Why, how often, sitting between you and Ellean, have I seen her cheeks turn scarlet as you've rattled off some tale that belongs by right to the club or the smoking-room! Have you noticed the blush? If you have, has the cause of it ever struck you? And



this is the girl you say you love, I admit that you *do* love, whose love you expect in return! Oh, Paula, I make the best, the only, excuse for you when I tell you you're blind!

PAULA.

Ellean—Ellean blushes easily.

AUBREY.

You blushed as easily a few years ago.

PAULA.

[*After a short pause.*] Well! Have you finished your sermon?

AUBREY

[*With a gesture of despair.*] Oh, Paula!

[*Going up to the window, and standing with his back to the room.*

PAULA.

[*To herself.*] A few—years ago! [*She walks slowly towards the door, then suddenly drops upon the ottoman in a paroxysm of weeping.*] O God! A few years ago!

AUBREY

[*Going to her.*] Paula!

PAULA.

[*Sobbing.*] Oh, don't touch me!

AUBREY

Paula!

PAULA

Oh, go away from me! [*He goes back a few steps, and after a little while she becomes calmer and rises unsteadily;*



then in an altered tone.] Look here—! [*He advances a step; she checks him with a quick gesture.*] Look here! Get rid of these people—Mabel and her husband—as soon as possible! I—I've done with them!

AUBREY

[*In a whisper.*] Paula!

PAULA

And then—then—when the time comes for Ellean to leave Mrs. Cortelyon, give me—give me another chance! [*He advances again, but she shrinks away.*] No, no!

[*She goes out by the door on the right. He sinks on to the settee, covering his eyes with his hands. There is a brief silence, then a* SERVANT *enters.*]

SERVANT.

Mrs. Cortelyon, sir, with Miss Ellean.

[AUBREY *rises to meet* Mrs. CORTELYON, *who enters, followed by* ELLEAN, *both being in travelling dresses. The* SERVANT *withdraws.*

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Shaking hands with* AUBREY.] Oh, my dear Aubrey!

AUBREY.

Mrs. Cortelyon! [*Kissing* ELLEAN.] Ellean dear!

ELLEAN.

Papa, is all well at home?

MRS. CORTELYON.

We're shockingly anxious.

AUBREY.

Yes, yes, all's well. This is quite unexpected. [*To* MRS. CORTELYON.] You've found Paris insufferably hot?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Insufferably hot! Paris is pleasant enough. We've had no letter from you!

AUBREY.

I wrote to Ellean a week ago.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Without alluding to the subject I had written to you upon.

AUBREY.

[*Thinking.*] Ah, of course—

MRS. CORTELYON.

And since then we've both written, and you've been absolutely silent. Oh, it's too bad!

AUBREY.

[*Picking up the letters from the table.*] It isn't altogether my fault. Here are the letters—

ELLEAN.

Papa!

MRS. CORTELYON.

They're unopened.

AUBREY.

An accident delayed their reaching me till this evening. I'm afraid this has upset you very much.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Upset me!

ELLEAN.

[*In an undertone to* MRS. CORTELYON.] Never mind. Not now, dear—not to-night.



AUBREY.

Eh?

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*To* ELLEAN, *aloud.*] Child, run away and take your things off. She doesn't look as if she'd journeyed from Paris to-day.

AUBREY.

I've never seen her with such a colour.

[*Taking* ELLEAN'S *hands.*

ELLEAN.

[*To* AUBREY, *in a faint voice.*] Papa, Mrs. Cortelyon has been so very, very kind to me, but I—I have come home. [*She goes out.*

AUBREY.

Come home! [*To* MRS. CORTELYON.] Ellean returns to us then?

MRS. CORTELYON.

That's the very point I put to you in my letters, and you oblige me to travel from Paris to Willowmere on a warm day to settle it. I think perhaps it's right that Ellean should be with you just now, although I— My dear friend, circumstances are a little altered.

AUBREY.

Alice, you're in some trouble.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Well—yes, I *am* in trouble. You remember pretty little Mrs. Brereton who was once Caroline Ardale?

AUBREY.

Quite well.



MRS. CORTELYON.

She's a widow now, poor thing. She has the *entresol* of the house where we've been lodging in the Avenue de Friedland. Caroline's a dear chum of mine; she formed a great liking for Ellean.

AUBREY.

I'm very glad.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Yes, it's nice for her to meet her mother's friends. Er—that young Hugh Ardale the papers were full of some time ago—he's Caroline Brereton's brother, you know.

AUBREY.

No, I didn't know. What did he do? I forget.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Checked one of those horrid mutinies at some far-away station in India. Marched down with a handful of his men and a few faithful natives, and held the place until he was relieved. They gave him his company and a V.C. for it.

AUBREY.

And he's Mrs. Brereton's brother?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Yes. He's with his sister—*was,* rather—in Paris. He's home—invalided. Good gracious, Aubrey, why don't you help me out? Can't you guess what has occurred?

AUBREY.

Alice!

MRS. CORTELYON.

Young Ardale—Ellean!



AUBREY.

An attachment?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Yes, Aubrey. [*After a little pause.*] Well, I suppose I've got myself into sad disgrace. But really I didn't foresee anything of this kind. A serious, reserved child like Ellean, and a boyish, high-spirited soldier—it never struck me as being likely. [AUBREY *paces to and fro thoughtfully.*] I did all I could directly Captain Ardale spoke—wrote to you at once. Why on earth don't you receive your letters promptly, and when you do get them why can't you open them? I endured the anxiety till last night, and then made up my mind—home! Of course, it has worried me terribly. My head's bursting. Are there any salts about? [AUBREY *fetches a bottle from the cabinet and hands it to her.*] We've had one of those hateful smooth crossings that won't let you be properly indisposed.

AUBREY.

My dear Alice, I assure you I've no thought of blaming you.

MRS. CORTELYON.

That statement always precedes a quarrel.

AUBREY.

I don't know whether this is the worst or the best luck. How will my wife regard it? Is Captain Ardale a good fellow?

MRS. CORTELYON.

My dear Aubrey, you'd better read up the accounts of his wonderful heroism. Face to face with death for a whole week; always with a smile and a cheering word for the poor helpless souls depending on him! Of course it's that that has stirred the depths of your child's nature. I've watched her while we've been dragging the story out of him,

and if angels look different from Ellean at that moment, I don't desire to meet any, that's all!

AUBREY.

If you were in my position—? But you can't judge.

MRS. CORTELYON.

Why, if I had a marriageable daughter of my own, and Captain Ardale proposed for her, naturally I should cry my eyes out all night—but I should thank Heaven in the morning.

AUBREY.

You believe so thoroughly in him?

MRS. CORTELYON.

Do you think I should have only a headache at this minute if I didn't! Look here, you've got to see me down the lane; that's the least you can do, my friend. Come into my house for a moment and shake hands with Hugh.

AUBREY.

What, is he here?

MRS. CORTELYON.

He came through with us, to present himself formally to-morrow. Where are my gloves? [AUBREY *fetches them from the ottoman.*] Make my apologies to Mrs. Tanqueray, please. She's well, I hope? [*Going towards the door.*] I can't feel sorry she hasn't seen me in this condition.

ELLEAN *enters.*

ELLEAN.

[*To* MRS. CORTELYON.] I've been waiting to wish you good night. I was afraid I'd missed you.



MRS. CORTELYON.

Good night, Ellean.

ELLEAN.

[*In a low voice, embracing* MRS. CORTELYON.] I can't thank you. Dear Mrs. Cortelyon!

MRS. CORTELYON.

[*Her arms round* ELLEAN, *in a whisper to* AUBREY.] Speak a word to her. [MRS. CORTELYON *goes out.*

AUBREY.

[*To* ELLEAN.] Ellean, I'm going to see Mrs. Cortelyon home. Tell Paula where I am; explain, dear.

[*Going to the door.*

ELLEAN.

[*Her head drooping.*] Yes. [*Quickly.*] Father! You are angry with me—disappointed?

AUBREY.

Angry? No.

ELLEAN.

Disappointed?

AUBREY.

[*Smiling and going to her and taking her hand.*] If so, it's only because you've shaken my belief in my discernment. I thought you took after your poor mother a little, Ellean; but there's a look on your face to-night, dear, that I never saw on hers—never, never.

ELLEAN.

[*Leaning her head on his shoulder.*] Perhaps I ought not to have gone away.



AUBREY.

Hush! You're quite happy?

ELLEAN.

Yes.

AUBREY.

That's right. Then, as you are quite happy, there is something I particularly want you to do for me, Ellean.

ELLEAN.

What is that?

AUBREY.

Be very gentle with Paula. Will you?

ELLEAN.

You think I have been unkind.

AUBREY.

[*Kissing her upon the forehead.*] Be very gentle with Paula.

[*He goes out, and she stands looking after him; then, as she turns thoughtfully from the door, a rose is thrown through the window and falls at her feet. She picks up the flower wonderingly and goes to the window.*

ELLEAN.

[*Starting back.*] Hugh!

[HUGH ARDALE, *a handsome young man of about seven-and-twenty, with a boyish face and manner, appears outside the window.*

HUGH.

Nelly! Nelly dear!



ELLEAN.

What's the matter?

HUGH.

Hush! Nothing. It's only fun. [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha! I've found out that Mrs. Cortelyon's meadow runs up to your father's plantation; I've come through a gap in the hedge.

ELLEAN.

Why, Hugh?

HUGH.

I'm miserable at The Warren: it's so different from the Avenue de Friedland. Don't look like that! Upon my word I meant just to peep at your home and go back, but I saw figures moving about here, and came nearer, hoping to get a glimpse of you. Was that your father?

[*Entering the room.*

ELLEAN.

Yes.

HUGH.

Isn't this fun! A rabbit ran across my foot while I was hiding behind that old yew.

ELLEAN.

You must go away; it's not right for you to be here like this.

HUGH.

But it's only fun, I tell you. You take everything so seriously. Do wish me good-night.

ELLEAN.

We have said good-night.

HUGH.

In the hall at The Warren, before Mrs. Cortelyon and

a man-servant. Oh, it's so different from the Avenue de Friedland!

ELLEAN.

[*Giving him her hand hastily.*] Good-night, Hugh.

HUGH.

Is that all? We might be the merest acquaintances.

[*He momentarily embraces her, but she releases herself.*

ELLEAN.

It's when you're like this that you make me feel utterly miserable. [*Throwing the rose from her angrily.*] Oh!

HUGH.

I've offended you now, I suppose?

ELLEAN.

Yes.

HUGH.

Forgive me, Nelly. Come into the garden for five minutes; we'll stroll down to the plantation.

ELLEAN.

No, no.

HUGH.

For two minutes—to tell me you forgive me.

ELLEAN.

I forgive you.

HUGH.

Evidently. I sha'n't sleep a wink to-night after this. What a fool I am! Come down to the plantation. Make it up with me.



ELLEAN.

There is somebody coming into this room. Do you wish to be seen here?

HUGH.

I shall wait for you behind that yew-tree. You must speak to me. Nelly!

[*He disappears.* PAULA *enters.*

PAULA.

Ellean!

ELLEAN.

You—you are very surprised to see me, Paula, of course.

PAULA.

Why are you here? Why aren't you with—your friend?

ELLEAN.

I've come home—if you'll have me. We left Paris this morning; Mrs. Cortelyon brought me back. She was here a minute or two ago; papa has just gone with her to The Warren. He asked me to tell you.

PAULA.

There are some people staying with us that I'd rather you didn't meet. It was hardly worth your while to return for a few hours.

ELLEAN.

A few hours?

PAULA.

Well, when do you go to London?

ELLEAN.

I don't think I go to London, after all.

PAULA.

[*Eagerly.*] You—you've quarrelled with her?

ELLEAN.

No, no, no, not that; but—Paula! [*In an altered tone.*] Paula!

PAULA.

[*Startled.*] Eh? [ELLEAN *goes deliberately to* PAULA *and kisses her.*] Ellean!

ELLEAN.

Kiss me.

PAULA.

What—what's come to you?

ELLEAN.

I want to behave differently to you in the future. Is it too late?

PAULA.

Too—late! [*Impulsively kissing* ELLEAN *and crying.*] No—no—no! No—no!

ELLEAN.

Paula, don't cry.

PAULA.

[*Wiping her eyes.*] I'm a little shaky; I haven't been sleeping. It's all right,—talk to me.

ELLEAN.

There is something I want to tell you—

PAULA.

Is there—is there?

[*They sit together on the ottoman,* PAULA *taking* ELLEAN'S *hand.*



ELLEAN.

Paula, in our house in the Avenue de Friedland, on the floor below us, there was a Mrs. Brereton. She used to be a friend of my mother's. Mrs. Cortelyon and I spent a great deal of our time with her.

PAULA.

[*Suspiciously.*] Oh! [*Letting* ELLEAN'S *hand fall.*] Is this lady going to take you up in place of Mrs. Cortelyon?

ELLEAN.

No, no. Her brother is staying with her—*was* staying with her. Her brother— [*Breaking off in confusion.*

PAULA.

Well?

ELLEAN.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] Paula—

[*She rises and walks away,* PAULA *following her.*

PAULA.

Ellean! [*Taking hold of her.*] You're not in love! [ELLEAN *looks at* PAULA *appealingly.*] Oh, *you* in love! You! Oh, this is why you've come home! Of course, you can make friends with me now! You'll leave us for good soon, I suppose; so it doesn't much matter being civil to me for a little while!

ELLEAN.

Oh, Paula!

PAULA.

Why, how you have deceived us—all of us! We've taken you for a cold-blooded little saint. The fools you've made of us! Saint Ellean, Saint Ellean!



ELLEAN.

Ah, I might have known you'd only mock me!

PAULA.

[*Her tone changing.*] Eh?

ELLEAN.

I—I can't talk to you. [*Sitting on the settee.*] You do nothing else but mock and sneer, nothing else.

PAULA.

Ellean dear! Ellean! I didn't mean it. I'm so horribly jealous, it's a sort of curse on me. [*Kneeling beside* ELLEAN *and embracing her.*] My tongue runs away with me. I'm going to alter, I swear I am. I've made some good resolutions, and as God's above me, I'll keep them! If you are in love, if you do ever marry, that's no reason why we shouldn't be fond of each other. Come, you've kissed me of your own accord—you can't take it back. Now we're friends again, aren't we? Ellean dear! I want to know everything, everything. Ellean dear, Ellean!

ELLEAN.

Paula, Hugh has done something that makes me very angry. He came with us from Paris to-day, to see papa. He is staying with Mrs. Cortelyon and—I ought to tell you—

PAULA.

Yes, yes. What?

ELLEAN.

He has found his way by The Warren meadow through the plantation up to this house. He is waiting to bid me good-night. [*Glancing towards the garden.*] He is—out there.



PAULA.

Oh!

ELLEAN.

What shall I do?

PAULA.

Bring him in to see me! Will you?

ELLEAN.

No, no.

PAULA.

But I'm dying to know him. Oh, yes, you must. I shall meet him before Aubrey does. [*Excitedly running her hands over her hair.*] I'm so glad. [ELLEAN *goes out by the window.*] The mirror—mirror. What a fright I must look. [*Not finding the hand-glass on the table, she jumps on to the settee, and surveys herself in the mirror over the mantelpiece, then sits quietly down and waits.*] Ellean! Just fancy! Ellean!

[*After a pause* ELLEAN *enters by the window with* HUGH.

ELLEAN.

Paula, this is Captain Ardale—Mrs. Tanqueray.

[PAULA *rises and turns, and she and* HUGH *stand staring blankly at each other for a moment or two; then* PAULA *advances and gives him her hand.*

PAULA.

[*In a strange voice, but calmly.*] How do you do?

HUGH.

How do you do?

PAULA.

[*To* ELLEAN.] Mr. Ardale and I have met in London, Ellean. Er—Captain Ardale now?

HUGH.

Yes.

ELLEAN.

In London?

PAULA.

They say the world's very small, don't they?

HUGH.

Yes.

PAULA.

Ellean, dear, I want to have a little talk about you to Mr. Ardale—Captain Ardale—alone. [*Putting her arms round* ELLEAN, *and leading her to the door.*] Come back in a little while. [ELLEAN *nods to* PAULA *with a smile and goes out, while* PAULA *stands watching her at the open door.*] In a little while—in a little—[*Closing the door and then taking a seat facing* HUGH.] Be quick! Mr. Tanqueray has only gone down to The Warren with Mrs. Cortelyon. What is to be done?

HUGH.

[*Blankly.*] Done?

PAULA.

Done—done. Something must be done.

HUGH.

I understood that Mr. Tanqueray had married a Mrs.—Mrs.—

PAULA.

Jarman?

HUGH.

Yes.

PAULA.

I'd been going by that name. You didn't follow my doings after we separated.



HUGH.

No.

PAULA.

[*Sneeringly.*] No.

HUGH.

I went out to India.

PAULA.

What's to be done?

HUGH.

Damn this chance!

PAULA.

Oh, my God!

HUGH.

Your husband doesn't know, does he?

PAULA.

That you and I—?

HUGH.

Yes.

PAULA.

No. He knows about others.

HUGH.

Not about me. How long were we—?

PAULA.

I don't remember, exactly.

HUGH.

Do you—do you think it matters?

PAULA.

His—his daughter. [*With a muttered exclamation he turns away, and sits with his head in his hands.*] What's to be done?

HUGH.

I wish I could think.

PAULA.

Oh! Oh! What happened to that flat of ours in Ethelbert Street.

HUGH.

I let it.

PAULA.

All that pretty furniture?

HUGH.

Sold it.

PAULA.

I came across the key of the escritoire the other day in an old purse! [*Suddenly realising the horror and hopelessness of her position, and starting to her feet with an hysterical cry of rage.*] What am I maundering about?

HUGH.

For God's sake, be quiet! Do let me think.

PAULA.

This will send me mad! [*Suddenly turning and standing over him.*] You—you beast, to crop up in my life again like this!

HUGH.

I always treated you fairly.

PAULA.

[*Weakly.*] Oh! I beg your pardon—I know you did—I—

[*She sinks on to the settee crying hysterically.*

HUGH.

Hush!



PAULA.

She kissed me to-night! I'd won her over! I've had such a fight to make her love me! And now—just as she's beginning to love me, to bring this on her!

HUGH.

Hush, hush! Don't break down!

PAULA.

[*Sobbing.*] You don't know! I—I haven't been getting on well in my marriage. It's been my fault. The life I used to lead spoilt me completely. But I'd made up my mind to turn over a new leaf from to-night. From to-night!

HUGH.

Paula—

PAULA.

Don't you call me that!

HUGH.

Mrs. Tanqueray, there is no cause for you to despair in this way. It's all right, I tell you—it *shall* be all right.

PAULA.

[*Shivering.*] What are we to do?

HUGH.

Hold our tongues.

PAULA.

Eh? [*Staring vacantly.*

HUGH.

The chances are a hundred to one against any one ever turning up who knew us when we were together. Besides, no one would be such a brute as to split on us. If anybody did do such a thing we should have to lie! What are



we upsetting ourselves like this for, when we've simply got to hold our tongues?

PAULA.

You're as mad as I am!

HUGH.

Can you think of a better plan?

PAULA.

There's only one plan possible—let's come to our senses! —Mr. Tanqueray must be told.

HUGH.

Your husband! What, and I lose Ellean! I lose Ellean!

PAULA.

You've got to lose her.

HUGH.

I won't lose her; I can't lose her!

PAULA.

Didn't I read of your doing any number of brave things in India? Why, you seem to be an awful coward!

HUGH.

That's another sort of pluck altogether; I haven't this sort of pluck.

PAULA.

Oh, I don't ask *you* to tell Mr. Tanqueray. That's my job.

HUGH.

[*Standing over her.*] You—you—you'd better! You—



PAULA.

[*Rising.*] Don't bully me! I intend to.

HUGH.

[*Taking hold of her; she wrenches herself free.*] Look here, Paula, I never treated you badly—you've owned it. Why should you want to pay me out like this? You don't know how I love Ellean!

PAULA.

Yes, that's just what I *do* know.

HUGH.

I say you don't! She's as good as my own mother. I've been downright honest with her, too. I told her, in Paris, that I'd been a bit wild at one time, and, after a damned wretched day, she promised to forgive me because of what I'd done since in India. She's behaved like an angel to me! Surely I oughtn't to lose her, after all, just because I've been like other fellows! No; I haven't been half as rackety as a hundred men we could think of. Paula, don't pay me out for nothing; be fair to me, there's a good girl—be fair to me!

PAULA.

Oh, I'm not considering you at all! I advise you not to stay here any longer: Mr. Tanqueray is sure to be back soon.

HUGH.

[*Taking up his hat.*] What's the understanding between us, then? What have we arranged to do?

PAULA.

I don't know what you're going to do; I've got to tell Mr. Tanqueray.



HUGH.

By God, you shall do nothing of the sort!
[*Approaching her fiercely.*

PAULA.

You shocking coward!

HUGH.

If you dare! [*Going up to the window.*] Mind! If you dare!

PAULA.

[*Following him.*] Why, what would you do?

HUGH.

[*After a short pause, sullenly.*] Nothing. I'd shoot myself—that's nothing. Good-night.

PAULA.

Good-night.

[*He disappears. She walks unsteadily to the ottoman, and sits; and as she does so her hand falls upon the little silver mirror, which she takes up, staring at her own reflection.*



THE FOURTH ACT

The Drawing-room at "Highercoombe," the same evening.

PAULA *is still seated on the ottoman, looking vacantly before her, with the little mirror in her hand.* LADY ORREYED *enters.*

LADY ORREYED.

There you are! You never came into the billiard-room. Isn't it maddening—Cayley Drummle gives me sixty out of a hundred, and beats me. I must be out of form, because I know I play remarkably well for a lady. Only last month —[PAULA *rises.*] Whatever is the matter with you, old girl?

PAULA.

Why?

LADY ORREYED.

[*Staring.*] It's the light, I suppose. [PAULA *replaces the mirror on the table.*] By Aubrey's bolting from the billiard-table in that fashion I thought perhaps—

PAULA.

Yes; it's all right.

LADY ORREYED.

You've patched it up? [PAULA *nods.*] Oh, I am jolly glad—! I mean—

PAULA.

Yes, I know what you mean. Thanks, Mabel.

LADY ORREYED.

[*Kissing* PAULA.] Now take my advice; for the future—



PAULA.

Mabel, if I've been disagreeable to you while you've been staying here, I—I beg your pardon.

[*Walking away and sitting down.*

LADY ORREYED.

You disagreeable, my dear? I haven't noticed it. Dodo and me both consider you make a first-class hostess; but then you've had such practice, haven't you? [*Dropping on to the ottoman and gaping.*] Oh, talk about being sleepy—!

PAULA.

Why don't you—!

LADY ORREYED.

Why, dear, I must hang about for Dodo. You may as well know it; he's in one of his moods.

PAULA.

[*Under her breath.*] Oh—!

LADY ORREYED.

Now, it's not his fault; it was deadly dull for him while we were playing billiards. Cayley Drummle did ask him to mark, but I stopped that; it's so easy to make a gentleman look like a billiard-marker. This is just how it always is; if poor old Dodo has nothing to do, he loses count, as you may say.

PAULA.

Hark!

[SIR GEORGE ORREYED *enters, walking slowly and deliberately; he looks pale and watery-eyed.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*With mournful indistinctness.*] I'm 'fraid we've lef' you a grea' deal to yourself to-night, Mrs. Tanqueray. At-



tra'tions of billiards. I apol'gise. I say, where's ol' Aubrey?

PAULA.

My husband has been obliged to go out to a neighbour's house.

SIR GEORGE.

I want his advice on a rather pressing matter connected with my family—my family. [*Sitting.*] To-morrow will do just as well.

LADY ORREYED.

[*To* PAULA.] This is the mood I hate so—drivelling about his precious family.

SIR GEORGE.

The fact is, Mrs. Tanqueray, I am not easy in my min' 'bout the way I am treatin' my poor ol' mother.

LADY ORREYED.

[*To* PAULA.] Do you hear that? That's *his* mother, but *my* mother he won't so much as look at!

SIR GEORGE.

I shall write to Bruton Street firs' thing in the morning.

LADY ORREYED.

[*To* PAULA.] Mamma has stuck to me through everything—well, you know!

SIR GEORGE.

I'll get ol' Aubrey to figure out a letter. I'll drop line to Uncle Fitz too—dooced shame of the ol' feller to chuck me over in this manner. [*Wiping his eyes.*] All my family have chucked me over.

LADY ORREYED.

[*Rising.*] Dodo!



SIR GEORGE.

Jus' because I've married beneath me, to be chucked over! Aunt Lydia, the General, Hooky Whitgrave, Lady Sugnall—my own dear sister!—all turn their backs on me. It's more than I can stan'!

LADY ORREYED.

[*Approaching him with dignity.*] Sir George, wish Mrs. Tanqueray good-night at once, and come upstairs. Do you hear me?

SIR GEORGE.

[*Rising angrily.*] Wha—!

LADY ORREYED.

Be quiet!

SIR GEORGE.

You presoom to order me about!

LADY ORREYED.

You're making an exhibition of yourself!

SIR GEORGE.

Look 'ere—!

LADY ORREYED.

Come along, I tell you!

[*He hesitates, utters a few inarticulate sounds, then snatches up a fragile ornament from the table, and is about to dash it on the ground.* LADY ORREYED *retreats, and* PAULA *goes to him.*

PAULA.

George! [*He replaces the ornament.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*Shaking* PAULA'S *hand.*] Good ni', Mrs. Tanqueray.



LADY ORREYED.

[*To* PAULA.] Good-night, darling. Wish Aubrey good-night for me. Now Dodo? [*She goes out.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*To* PAULA.] I say, are you goin' to sit up for ol' Aubrey?

PAULA.

Yes.

SIR GEORGE.

Shall I keep you comp'ny?

PAULA.

No, thank you, George.

SIR GEORGE.

Sure?

PAULA.

Yes, sure.

SIR GEORGE.

[*Shaking hands.*] Good-night again.

PAULA.

Good-night.

[*She turns away. He goes out, steadying himself carefully.* DRUMMLE *appears outside the window, smoking.*

DRUMMLE.

[*Looking into the room and seeing* PAULA.] My last cigar. Where's Aubrey?

PAULA.

Gone down to The Warren, to see Mrs. Cortelyon home.



DRUMMLE.

[*Entering the room.*] Eh? Did you say Mrs. Cortelyon?

PAULA.

Yes. She has brought Ellean back.

DRUMMLE.

Bless my soul! Why?

PAULA.

I—I'm too tired to tell you, Cayley. If you stroll along the lane you'll meet Aubrey. Get the news from him.

DRUMMLE.

[*Going up to the window.*] Yes, yes. [*Returning to* PAULA.] I don't want to bother you, only—the anxious old woman, you know. Are you and Aubrey—?

PAULA.

Good friends again?

DRUMMLE.

[*Nodding.*] Um.

PAULA.

[*Giving him her hand.*] Quite, Cayley, quite.

DRUMMLE.

[*Retaining her hand.*] That's capital. As I'm off so early to-morrow morning, let me say now—thank you for your hospitality.

[*He bends over her hand gallantly, then goes out by the window.*

PAULA.

[*To herself.*] "Are you and Aubrey—?" "Good friends again?" "Yes." "Quite, Cayley, quite."



[*There is a brief pause, then* AUBREY *enters hurriedly, wearing a light overcoat and carrying a cap.*

AUBREY.

Paula dear! Have you seen Ellean?

PAULA.

I found her here when I came down.

AUBREY.

She—she's told you?

PAULA.

Yes, Aubrey.

AUBREY.

It's extraordinary, isn't it! Not that somebody should fall in love with Ellean, or that Ellean herself should fall in love. All that's natural enough and was bound to happen, I suppose, sooner or later. But this young fellow! You know his history?

PAULA.

His history?

AUBREY.

You remember the papers were full of his name a few months ago?

PAULA.

Oh, yes.

AUBREY.

The man's as brave as a lion, there's no doubt about that; and, at the same time, he's like a big good-natured schoolboy, Mrs. Cortelyon says. Have you ever pictured the kind of man Ellean would marry some day?

PAULA.

I can't say that I have.

AUBREY.

A grave, sedate fellow I've thought about—hah! She has fallen in love with the way in which Ardale practically laid down his life to save those poor people shut up in the Residency. [*Taking off his coat.*] Well, I suppose if a man can do that sort of thing, one ought to be content. And yet—[*Throwing his coat on the settee.*] I should have met him to-night, but he'd gone out. Paula dear, tell me how you look upon this business.

PAULA.

Yes, I will—I must. To begin with, I—I've seen Mr. Ardale.

AUBREY.

Captain Ardale?

PAULA.

Captain Ardale.

AUBREY.

Seen him?

PAULA.

While you were away he came up here, through our grounds, to try to get a word with Ellean. I made her fetch him in and present him to me.

AUBREY.

[*Frowning.*] Doesn't Captain Ardale know there's a lodge and a front door to this place? Never mind! What is your impression of him?

PAULA.

Aubrey, do you recollect my bringing you a letter—a letter giving you an account of myself—to the Albany late one night—the night before we got married?

AUBREY.

A letter?



PAULA.

You burnt it; don't you know?

AUBREY.

Yes; I know.

PAULA.

His name was in that letter.

AUBREY.

[*Going back from her slowly, and staring at her.*] I don't understand.

PAULA.

Well—Ardale and I once kept house together. [*He remains silent, not moving.*] Why don't you strike me? Hit me in the face—I'd rather you did! Hurt me! hurt me!

AUBREY.

[*After a pause.*] What did you—and this man—say to each other—just now?

PAULA.

I—hardly—know.

AUBREY.

Think!

PAULA.

The end of it all was that I—I told him I must inform you of—what had happened . . . he didn't want me to do that . . . I declared that I would . . . he dared me to. [*Breaking down.*] Let me alone!—oh!

AUBREY.

Where was my daughter while this went on?

PAULA.

I—I had sent her out of the room . . . that is all right.



AUBREY.

Yes, yes—yes, yes.

[*He turns his head towards the door.*

PAULA.

Who's that?

A SERVANT *enters with a letter.*

SERVANT.

The coachman has just run up with this from The Warren, sir. [AUBREY *takes the letter.*] It's for Mrs. Tanqueray, sir; there's no answer.

[*The* SERVANT *withdraws.* AUBREY *goes to* PAULA *and drops the letter into her lap; she opens it with uncertain hands.*

PAULA.

[*Reading it to herself.*] It's from—him. He's going away—or gone—I think. [*Rising in a weak way.*] What does it say? I never could make out his writing.

[*She gives the letter to* AUBREY, *and stands near him, looking at the letter over his shoulder as he reads.*

AUBREY.

[*Reading.*] "I shall be in Paris by to-morrow evening. Shall wait there, at Meurice's, for a week, ready to receive any communication you or your husband may address to me. Please invent some explanation to Ellean. Mrs. Tanqueray, for God's sake, do what you can for me."

[PAULA *and* AUBREY *speak in low voices, both still looking at the letter.*

PAULA.

Has he left The Warren, I wonder, already?



AUBREY.

That doesn't matter.

PAULA.

No; but I can picture him going quietly off. Very likely he's walking on to Bridgeford or Cottering to-night, to get the first train in the morning. A pleasant stroll for him.

AUBREY.

We'll reckon he's gone, that's enough.

PAULA.

That isn't to be answered in any way?

AUBREY.

Silence will answer that.

PAULA.

He'll soon recover his spirits, I know.

AUBREY.

You know. [*Offering her the letter.*] You don't want this, I suppose?

PAULA.

No.

AUBREY.

It's done with—done with.

[*He tears the letter into small pieces. She has dropped the envelope; she searches for it, finds it, and gives it to him.*

PAULA.

Here!

AUBREY.

[*Looking at the remnants of the letter.*] This is no good; I must burn it.

PAULA.

Burn it in your room.

AUBREY.

Yes.

PAULA.

Put it in your pocket for now.

AUBREY.

Yes.

[*He does so.* ELLEAN *enters, and they both turn, guiltily, and stare at her.*

ELLEAN.

[*After a short silence, wonderingly.*] Papa—

AUBREY.

What do you want, Ellean?

ELLEAN.

I heard from Willis that you had come in; I only want to wish you good-night. [PAULA *steals away, without looking back.*] What's the matter? Ah! Of course, Paula has told you about Captain Ardale?

AUBREY.

Well?

ELLEAN.

Have you and he met?

AUBREY.

No.

ELLEAN.

You are angry with him; so was I. But to-morrow when he calls and expresses his regret—to-morrow—

AUBREY.

Ellean—Ellean!

ELLEAN.

Yes, papa?

AUBREY.

I—I can't let you see this man again. [*He walks away from her in a paroxysm of distress, then, after a moment or two, he returns to her and takes her to his arms.*] Ellean! my child!

ELLEAN.

[*Releasing herself.*] What has happened, papa? What is it?

AUBREY.

[*Thinking out his words deliberately.*] Something has occurred, something has come to my knowledge, in relation to Captain Ardale, which puts any further acquaintanceship between you two out of the question.

ELLEAN.

Any further acquaintanceship . . . out of the question?

AUBREY.

Yes.

[*Advancing to her quickly, but she shrinks from him.*

ELLEAN.

No, no—I am quite well. [*After a short pause.*] It's not an hour ago since Mrs. Cortelyon left you and me together here; you had nothing to urge against Captain Ardale then.

AUBREY.

No.

ELLEAN.

You don't know each other; you haven't even seen him this evening. Father!

AUBREY.

I have told you he and I have not met.

ELLEAN.

Mrs. Cortelyon couldn't have spoken against him to you just now. No, no, no; she's too good a friend to both of us. Aren't you going to give me some explanation? You can't take this position towards me—towards Captain Ardale—without affording me the fullest explanation.

AUBREY.

Ellean, there are circumstances connected with Captain Ardale's career which you had better remain ignorant of. It must be sufficient for you that I consider these circumstances render him unfit to be your husband.

ELLEAN.

Father!

AUBREY.

You must trust me, Ellean; you must try to understand the depth of my love for you and the—the agony it gives me to hurt you. You must trust me.

ELLEAN.

I will, father; but you must trust me a little too. Circumstances connected with Captain Ardale's career?

AUBREY.

Yes.

ELLEAN.

When he presents himself here to-morrow of course you will see him and let him defend himself?

AUBREY.

Captain Ardale will not be here to-morrow.



ELLEAN.

Not! You have stopped his coming here?

AUBREY.

Indirectly—yes.

ELLEAN.

But just now he was talking to me at that window! Nothing had taken place then! And since then nothing can have—! Oh! Why—you have heard something against him from Paula.

AUBREY.

From—Paula.

ELLEAN.

She knows him.

AUBREY.

She has told you so?

ELLEAN.

When I introduced Captain Ardale to her she said she had met him in London. Of course! It is Paula who has done this!

AUBREY.

[*In a hard voice.*] I—I hope you—you'll refrain from rushing at conclusions. There's nothing to be gained by trying to avoid the main point, which is that you must drive Captain Ardale out of your thoughts. Understand that! You're able to obtain comfort from your religion, aren't you? I'm glad to think that's so. I talk to you in a harsh way, Ellean, but I feel your pain almost as acutely as you do. [*Going to the door.*] I—I can't say anything more to you to-night.

ELLEAN.

Father! [*He pauses at the door.*] Father, I'm obliged to ask you this; there's no help for it—I've no mother to go to. Does what you have heard about Captain Ardale

concern the time when he led a wild, a dissolute life in London?

AUBREY.

[*Returning to her slowly and staring at her.*] Explain yourself!

ELLEAN.

He has been quite honest with me. One day—in Paris—he confessed to me—what a man's life is—what his life had been.

AUBREY.

[*Under his breath.*] Oh!

ELLEAN.

He offered to go away, not to approach me again.

AUBREY.

And you—you accepted his view of what a man's life is?

ELLEAN.

As far as *I* could forgive him, I forgave him.

AUBREY.

[*With a groan.*] Why, when was it you left us? It hasn't taken you long to get your robe "just a little dusty at the hem!"

ELLEAN.

What do you mean?

AUBREY.

Hah! A few weeks ago my one great desire was to keep you ignorant of evil.

ELLEAN.

Father, it is impossible to be ignorant of evil. Instinct, common instinct, teaches us what is good and bad. Surely



I am none the worse for knowing what is wicked and detesting it!

AUBREY.

Detesting it! Why, you love this fellow!

ELLEAN.

Ah, you don't understand! I have simply judged Captain Ardale as we all pray to be judged. I have lived in imagination through that one week in India when he deliberately offered his life back to God to save those wretched, desperate people. In his whole career I see now nothing but that one week; those few hours bring him nearer the saints, I believe, than fifty uneventful years of mere blamelessness would have done! And so, father, if Paula has reported anything to Captain Ardale's discredit—

AUBREY.

Paula—!

ELLEAN.

It must be Paula; it can't be anybody else.

AUBREY.

You—you'll please keep Paula out of the question. Finally, Ellean, understand me—I have made up my mind.

[*Again going to the door.*

ELLEAN.

But wait—listen! I have made up my mind also.

AUBREY.

Ah! I recognise your mother in you now!

ELLEAN.

You need not speak against my mother because you are angry with me!

AUBREY.

I—I hardly know what I'm saying to you. In the morning—in the morning—

[*He goes out. She remains standing, and turns her head to listen. Then, after a moment's hesitation she goes softly to the window, and looks out under the verandah.*

ELLEAN.

[*In a whisper.*] Paula! Paula!

[PAULA *appears outside the window and steps into the room; her face is white and drawn, her hair is a little disordered.*

PAULA.

[*Huskily.*] Well?

ELLEAN.

Have you been under the verandah all the while—listening?

PAULA.

N—no.

ELLEAN.

You *have* overheard us—I see you have. And it *is* you who have been speaking to my father against Captain Ardale. Isn't it? Paula, why don't you own it or deny it?

PAULA.

Oh, I—I don't mind owning it; why should I?

ELLEAN.

Ah! You seem to have been very, very eager to tell your tale.

PAULA.

No, I wasn't eager, Ellean. I'd have given something not to have had to do it. I wasn't eager.



ELLEAN.

Not! Oh, I think you might safely have spared us all for a little while.

PAULA.

But, Ellean, you forget I—I am your stepmother. It was my—my duty—to tell your father what I—what I knew—

ELLEAN.

What you knew! Why, after all, what can you know? You can only speak from gossip, report, hearsay! How is it possible that you—! [*She stops abruptly. The two women stand staring at each other for a moment; then* ELLEAN *backs away from* PAULA *slowly.*] Paula!

PAULA.

What—what's the matter?

ELLEAN.

You—you knew Captain Ardale in London!

PAULA.

Why—what do you mean?

ELLEAN.

Oh!

[*She makes for the door, but* PAULA *catches her by the wrist.*

PAULA.

You shall tell me what you mean!

ELLEAN.

Ah! [*Suddenly, looking fixedly into* PAULA's *face.*] You know what I mean.

PAULA.

You accuse me!



ELLEAN.

It's in your face!

PAULA.

[*Hoarsely.*] You—you think I'm—that sort of creature, do you?

ELLEAN.

Let me go!

PAULA.

Answer me! You've always hated me! [*Shaking her.*] Out with it!

ELLEAN.

You hurt me!

PAULA.

You've always hated me! You shall answer me!

ELLEAN.

Well, then, I have always—always—

PAULA.

What?

ELLEAN.

I have always known what you were!

PAULA.

Ah! Who—who told you?

ELLEAN.

Nobody but yourself! From the first moment I saw you I knew you were altogether unlike the good women I'd left; directly I saw you I knew what my father had done. You've wondered why I've turned from you! There—that's the reason! Oh, but this is a horrible way for the truth to come home to every one! Oh!



PAULA.

It's a lie! It's all a lie! [*Forcing* ELLEAN *down upon her knees.*] You shall beg my pardon for it. [ELLEAN *utters a loud shriek of terror.*] Ellean, I'm a good woman! I swear I am! I've always been a good woman! You dare to say I've ever been anything else! It's a lie!

[*Throwing her off violently.*

AUBREY *re-enters.*

AUBREY.

Paula! [PAULA *staggers back as* AUBREY *advances. Raising* ELLEAN.] What's this? What's this?

ELLEAN.

[*Faintly.*] Nothing. It—it's my fault. Father, I—I don't wish to see Captain Ardale again.

[*She goes out,* AUBREY *slowly following her to the door.*

PAULA.

Aubrey, she—she guesses.

AUBREY.

Guesses?

PAULA.

About me—and Ardale.

AUBREY.

About you—and Ardale?

PAULA.

She says she suspected my character from the beginning . . . that's why she's always kept me at a distance . . . and now she sees through—

[*She falters; he helps her to the ottoman, where she sits.*



AUBREY.

[*Bending over her.*] Paula, you must have said something—admitted something—

PAULA.

I don't think so. It—it's in my face.

AUBREY.

What?

PAULA.

She tells me so. She's right! I'm tainted through and through; anybody can see it, anybody can find it out. You said much the same to me to-night.

AUBREY.

If she has got this idea into her head we must drive it out, that's all. We must take steps to— What shall we do? We had better—better— What—what?

[*Sitting and staring before him.*

PAULA.

Ellean! So meek, so demure! You've often said she reminded you of her mother. Yes, I know now what your first marriage was like.

AUBREY.

We must drive this idea out of her head. We'll do something. What shall we do?

PAULA.

She's a regular woman too. She could forgive *him* easily enough—but *me!* That's just a woman!

AUBREY.

What *can* we do?



PAULA.

Why, nothing! She'd have no difficulty in following up her suspicions. Suspicions! You should have seen how she looked at me! [*He buries his head in his hands. There is silence for a time, then she rises slowly, and goes and sits beside him.*] Aubrey.

AUBREY.

Yes?

PAULA.

I'm very sorry.

[*Without meeting her eyes, he lays his hand on her arm for a moment.*

AUBREY.

Well, we must look things straight in the face. [*Glancing around.*] At any rate, we've done with this.

PAULA.

I suppose so. [*After a brief pause.*] Of course, she and I can't live under the same roof any more. You know she kissed me to-night, of her own accord.

AUBREY.

I asked her to alter towards you.

PAULA.

That was it, then.

AUBREY.

I—I'm sorry I sent her away.

PAULA.

It was my fault; I made it necessary.

AUBREY.

Perhaps now she'll propose to return to the convent,—well, she must.



PAULA.

Would you like to keep her with you and—and leave me?

AUBREY.

Paula—!

PAULA.

You needn't be afraid I'd go back to—what I was. I couldn't.

AUBREY.

S—sh, for God's sake! We—you and I—we'll get out of this place . . . what a fool I was to come here again!

PAULA.

You lived here with your first wife!

AUBREY.

We'll get out of this place and go abroad again, and begin afresh.

PAULA.

Begin afresh?

AUBREY.

There's no reason why the future shouldn't be happy for us—no reason that I can see—

PAULA.

Aubrey!

AUBREY.

Yes?

PAULA.

You'll never forget this, you know.

AUBREY.

This?



PAULA.

To-night, and everything that's led up to it. Our coming here, Ellean, our quarrels—cat and dog!—Mrs. Cortelyon, the Orreyeds, this man! What an everlasting nightmare for you!

AUBREY.

Oh, we can forget it, if we choose.

PAULA.

That was always your cry. How *can* one do it!

AUBREY.

We'll make our calculations solely for the future, talk about the future, think about the future.

PAULA.

I believe the future is only the past again, entered through another gate.

AUBREY.

That's an awful belief.

PAULA.

To-night proves it. You must see now that, do what we will, go where we will, you'll be continually reminded of—what I was. I see it.

AUBREY.

You're frightened to-night; meeting this man has frightened you. But that sort of thing isn't likely to recur. The world isn't quite so small as all that.

PAULA.

Isn't it? The only great distances it contains are those we carry within ourselves—the distances that separate hus-



bands and wives, for instance. And so it'll be with us. You'll do your best—oh, I know that—you're a good fellow. But circumstances will be too strong for you in the end, mark my words.

AUBREY.

Paula—!

PAULA.

Of course I'm pretty now—I'm pretty still—and a pretty woman, whatever else she may be, is always—well, endurable. But even now I notice that the lines of my face are getting deeper; so are the hollows about my eyes. Yes, my face is covered with little shadows that usen't to be there, Oh, I know I'm "going off." I hate paint and dye and those messes, but, by-and-bye, I shall drift the way of the others; I sha'n't be able to help myself. And then, some day—perhaps very suddenly, under a queer, fantastic light at night or in the glare of the morning—that horrid, irresistible truth that physical repulsion forces on men and women will come to you, and you'll sicken at me.

AUBREY.

I—!

PAULA.

You'll see me then, at last, with other people's eyes; you'll see me just as your daughter does now, as all wholesome folks see women like me. And I shall have no weapon to fight with—not one serviceable little bit of prettiness left me to defend myself with! A worn-out creature—broken up, very likely, some time before I ought to be—my hair bright, my eyes dull, my body too thin or too stout, my cheeks raddled and ruddled—a ghost, a wreck, a caricature, a candle that gutters, call such an end what you like! Oh, Aubrey, what shall I be able to say to you then? And this is the future you talk about! I know it—I know it! [*He is still sitting staring forward; she rocks herself to and fro as if in pain.*] Oh, Aubrey! Oh! Oh!



AUBREY.

Paula—! [*Trying to comfort her.*

PAULA.

Oh, and I wanted so much to sleep to-night! [*Laying her head upon his shoulder. From the distance, in the garden, there comes the sound of* DRUMMLE'S *voice; he is singing as he approaches the house.*] That's Cayley, coming back from The Warren. [*Starting up.*] He doesn't know, evidently. I—I won't see him!

[*She goes out quickly.* DRUMMLE'S *voice comes nearer.* AUBREY *rouses himself and snatches up a book from the table, making a pretence of reading. After a moment or two,* DRUMMLE *appears at the window and looks in.*

DRUMMLE.

Aha! my dear chap!

AUBREY.

Cayley?

DRUMMLE.

[*Coming into the room.*] I went down to The Warren after you.

AUBREY.

Yes?

DRUMMLE.

Missed you. Well—I've been gossiping with Mrs. Cortelyon. Confound you, I've heard the news!

AUBREY.

What have you heard?

DRUMMLE.

What have I heard! Why—Ellean and young Ardale! [*Looking at* AUBREY *keenly.*] My dear Aubrey! Alice is

under the impression that you are inclined to look on the affair favourably.

AUBREY.

[*Rising and advancing to* DRUMMLE.] You've not—met—Captain Ardale?

DRUMMLE.

No. Why do you ask? By-the-bye, I don't know that I need tell you—but it's rather strange. He's not at The Warren to-night.

AUBREY.

No?

DRUMMLE.

He left the house half an hour ago, to stroll about the lanes; just now a note came from him, a scribble in pencil, simply telling Alice that she would receive a letter from him to-morrow. What's the matter? There's nothing very wrong, is there? My dear chap, pray forgive me if I'm asking too much.

AUBREY.

Cayley, you—you urged me to send her away!

DRUMMLE.

Ellean! Yes, yes. But—but—by all accounts this is quite an eligible young fellow. Alice has been giving me the history—

AUBREY.

Curse him! [*Hurling his book to the floor.*] Curse him! Yes, I do curse him—him and his class! Perhaps I curse myself too in doing it. He has only led "a man's life"—just as I, how many of us, have done! The misery he has brought on me and mine it's likely enough we, in our time, have helped to bring on other's by this leading "a man's life!" But I do curse him for all that. My God, *I've*



nothing more to fear—I've paid *my* fine! And so I can curse him in safety. Curse him! Curse him!

DRUMMLE.

In Heaven's name, tell me what's happened?

AUBREY.

[*Gripping* DRUMMLE's *arm.*] Paula! Paula!

DRUMMLE.

What?

AUBREY.

They met to-night here. They—they—they're not strangers to each other.

DRUMMLE.

Aubrey!

AUBREY.

Curse him! My poor, wretched wife! My poor, wretched wife!

[*The door opens and* ELLEAN *appears. The two men turn to her. There is a moment's silence.*

ELLEAN.

Father . . . father . . . !

AUBREY.

Ellean?

ELLEAN.

I—I want you. [*He goes to her.*] Father . . . go to Paula! [*He looks into her face, startled.*] Quickly—quickly! [*He passes her to go out; she seizes his arm, with a cry.*] No, no; don't go!

[*He shakes her off and goes.* ELLEAN *staggers back towards* DRUMMLE.

DRUMMLE.

[*To* ELLEAN.] What do you mean? What do you mean?

ELLEAN.

I—I went to her room—to tell her I was sorry for something I had said to her. And I *was* sorry—I *was* sorry. I heard the fall. I—I've seen her. It's horrible.

DRUMMLE.

She—she has——!

ELLEAN.

Killed—herself? Yes—yes. So everybody will say. But I know—I helped to kill her. If I'd only been merciful!

[*She faints upon the ottoman. He pauses for a moment irresolutely—then he goes to the door, opens it, and stands looking out.*

THE END.



THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH





CRITICAL PREFACE *

Once, in a moment of audacity, I asked Pinero suddenly to tell me which one of all his many plays he liked the most. The question caught him unprepared; and he began by saying that he liked one play in one way and another in another. "That"—I countered—"is, of course, the proper answer: but tell me the truth—I really want to know." He paced the room a moment, rather thoughtfully; and then he returned and smiled. "I have always liked especially," he said, "the play called *Mrs. Ebbsmith.*" "Why?," I asked; for, at the moment, I was bent on finding out. "Why?,"—he answered,—"Because of Agnes Ebbsmith,—the most interesting woman it has ever been my privilege to watch."

This answer seemed to me surprising; for I had always regarded *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* as one of Sir Arthur's incomplete successes. I had expected him to cite *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray,* or *Iris,* or *Mid-Channel,* or *The Thunderbolt,* as his most conspicuous achievement. But, now that I have thought the matter over, I think that I can understand the causes of his special fondness for the present play. Agnes is, indeed, the most interesting of his women; and it is Pinero's practice, at the outset of a task of composition, to live exclusively for many months in close association with his imaginary characters. He must have enjoyed, in a particular degree, the experience of getting ready to write *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith.* Furthermore, this play remains—of all his dramas—the most ambitious in intention. It is the sole work in which Pinero has obviously set himself into competition with Ibsen as a student of the

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intricate phenomena of feminine psychology, as those phenomena are complicated by the exigencies of our modern social system.

The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith discusses a theme which is not fortuitous but universal. The thesis of the drama—if the author will permit the use of this convenient term—appears to be that the reason why "free love" between the sexes is inevitably doomed to ultimate disaster is that—in any so-called "free" relation—one party to the contract will fail to live up to the lofty mood imagined by the other. Before the point at which the play begins, Agnes Ebbsmith had been offered every reason to believe that she had found a fitting mate in Lucas Cleeve. The tragedy develops as she gradually comes to see that her imagined idol is merely, after all, a man of clay. The slow and pitiful surrender, one by one, of all her theoretical ideals, for the sake of holding fast the simple conquest of her womanhood, is a subject that has never been surpassed, in importance or in poignancy, within the entire range of the contemporary drama.

Yet, to me—as to many antecedent critics—it has always seemed that the project of *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* has been imperfectly achieved. The play begins most promisingly; but—in my opinion—it collapses at the climax, and, in the last act—to quote a phrase of Stevenson's—it "miserably straggles to an end in sandy deltas." It reminds me, in effect, of that monumental figure imagined by John Webster,—"a huge pyramid, begun upon a large and ample base, which ends in a little point, a kind of nothing."

When Pinero told me of his special fondness for this play, I returned to the audacious mood of opposition. "The Bible-burning episode," I said, "is offered, by position, as the climax of the drama. I have never believed this incident. I don't believe that Mrs. Ebbsmith threw the Bible into the fire; and, even if she did, I don't believe she ever snatched it out again."

Sir Arthur paced the room once more, and pondered retrospectively. At last he said, "If you don't believe that

incident, the fault is mine. It really happened. I put it into the play because it really happened: and if you don't believe it, it must be because I have not told you enough of what I know." He then proceeded to talk to me for twenty minutes about what may be called the unpublished facts of the childhood of Agnes Ebbsmith. From this conversation I derived the same impression that was received by Mr. Archer in one of his recorded conversations with Henrik Ibsen,—the impression, namely, that a dramatist must always know much more about his characters than he finds it necessary to report. In the text of *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith,* the author had said many things about the father of the heroine. In this unpremeditated conversation, Sir Arthur told me many things about her mother. He explained to me that the sour-minded mother of Agnes Ebbsmith—who had been born and brought up more than half a century ago—had revered the Bible as a symbol of sanctity and had implanted this belief in the impressionable mind of Agnes when the little girl was very young. This teaching had been subsequently overturned by the influence of the freer and more advanced opinions which Agnes had acquired from her father in the years of adolescence. Yet—according to Pinero—the emotions are stronger than the intellect; and, when Agnes was confronted by the climax of her destiny, she reverted suddenly to type, and—discarding the intellectual opinions of her father—she re-assumed unthinkingly the full force of those traditional emotions which, at a very early age, had been impressed upon her by her mother.

This explanation of the Bible-burning episode seemed convincing from the point of view of life; but I still believe that this all-important incident is unconvincing from the point of view of art. The author has not told us enough about the past experience of Agnes Ebbsmith to persuade us to believe that her theatrical behaviour in this passage is—in point of fact—inevitable. Often, in the practice of the art of fiction, an author may know so much about a char-



acter that he may be tempted to forget that the public is not equally acquainted with the unexploited facts. In this connection, the present writer is reminded of a famous passage in a letter from Stevenson to Barrie, in which Tusitala said,—"Thomas affects me as a lie—I beg your pardon; doubtless he was somebody you knew; that leads people so far astray. The actual is not the true." The point in question is not whether Agnes Ebbsmith burned the Bible, but whether the audience has been made ready to believe that she burned it.

The exposition of *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith* is less lucid, less straightforward, and less beautiful in pattern than the exposition of *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray;* but it exhibits several points of special interest. The gradual disclosure of the fundamentary detail that the apparent Mrs. Cleeve is not actually Mrs. Cleeve is very ably managed. The facts are brought out in a conversation between men; but the full truth is told for the first time in a conversation between women. Admirable, also, is the manner in which the importance of the Duke of St. Olpherts is emphasised, throughout the first act, by the application of that technical expedient which may be termed "inverse proportion." This character is one of the most important personages of the play; not only is he interesting in himself but he also leads the opposition arrayed to thwart the wills of the hero and the heroine. In the first act, he is hinted at and talked about until the audience desires ardently to see him; yet, just as he seems to be about to make his entrance, the curtain falls. The part of the sardonic Duke is manifestly strengthened by the increment of expectancy which is piled up by the clever retardation of his first appearance on the stage. After listening to Mrs. Ebbsmith's wondrous line, "He must be a man of small resources: it is so easy to mock," the spectator of the play feels almost willing to buy a second ticket in order to enjoy the privilege of meeting the unusually interesting character that has not yet appeared upon the stage.

The second act affords a striking instance of the

method by which an abstract principle of life may be translated into concrete terms, for the sake of exhibition on the stage. It would be easy enough for an essayist to expound the theory that a compact of "free love" is usually doomed to fail by reason of the fact that one of the two parties to the contract is nearly always certain to be less idealistic and more sensual than the other. But how is such a truth to be exhibited in terms that are appreciable by the eye? This was the problem that was presented to the playwright; and Pinero has solved this problem easily by the introduction of an object so concrete as a fashionable evening gown. This concrete object is brought upon the stage at the very outset of the second act; and everything that is said about this gown—both before and after it is donned by Agnes Ebbsmith—becomes illustrative of character and illuminative of life.

Whenever I re-read *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith,* I encounter many passages that seem to me more moving than any other moments in the modern drama. The case of Agnes Ebbsmith appears to be so very pitiful when Lucas Cleeve begins to slump around the stage with feet of clay! There is nothing, in experience, more difficult to bear than the death of an ideal.

Again, there is an eloquence in certain speeches that is irresistible. For instance, there is a little speech—spoken very early in the play by Mrs. Thorpe—which I always try to overlook whenever I re-read the text, because it seems so tragic as to be intolerable.—"The weather's the same all over Europe, according to the papers. Do you think it's really going to settle at last? To me these chilly, showery nights are terrible. You know, I still tuck my child up at night-time, still have my last peep at him before going to my own bed; and it is awful to listen to these cold rains—drip, drip, drip upon that little green coverlet of his."

If this writing is not great, I must confess an utter inability to appreciate the peculiar kind of greatness that is demanded by the undeniable conventions of the modern the-



atre. The text of *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*—considered as a whole—is written very carefully, and at many points, perhaps, a little too rhetorically. The dialogue, at times, is too formal to seem conversational; but it should always be remembered that there is a necessary difference between the casual peach that falls upon the ground and the peach that is picked up and carefully preserved in brandy.

Pinero wrote *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* without selecting his actors in advance; but, in preparing *The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith,* which was produced a little less than two years later, he was guided from the outset by a predetermined casting of the leading parts. The character of Agnes Ebbsmith was carefully fashioned to fit the capabilities of Mrs. Patrick Campbell, who had achieved an unforeseen success in her performance of the part of Paula Tanqueray. Mrs. Campbell is still "notorious" as Mrs. Ebbsmith; and this particular performance remains one of the most attractive items in her repertory, despite the lapse of more than twenty years.

C. H.



THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

THE PERSONS OF THE PLAY.

DUKE OF ST. OLPHERTS.
SIR SANDFORD CLEEVE.
LUCAS CLEEVE.
REV. AMOS WINTERFIELD.
SIR GEORGE BRODRICK.
DR. KIRKE.
FORTUNÉ.
ANTONIO POPPI.

AGNES.
GERTRUDE THORPE.
SYBIL CLEEVE.
NELLA.
HEPHZIBAH.

The Scene is laid in Venice; firstly at the Palazzo Arconati, a lodging-house on the Grand Canal; afterwards in an apartment in the Campo S. Bartolomeo.

It is Eastertide, a week passing between the events of the first and second acts.



THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH

Original cast, as first disclosed at the Garrick Theatre, March 13th, 1895.

Duke of St. Olpherts . .	*Mr. John Hare*
Sir Sandford Cleeve . .	*Mr. Ian Robertson*
Lucas Cleeve	*Mr. Forbes-Robertson*
Rev. Amos Winterfield .	*Mr. C. Aubrey Smith*
Sir George Brodrick . .	*Mr. Joseph Carne*
Dr. Kirke	*Mr. Fred Thorne*
Fortuné	*Mr. Gerald du Maurier*
Antonio Poppi	*Mr. C. F. Caravoglia*
Agnes	*Mrs. Patrick Campbell*
Gertrude Thorpe . . .	*Miss Ellis Jeffreys*
Sybil Cleeve	*Miss Eleanor Calhoun*
Nella	*Miss Mary Halsey*
Hephzibah	*Mrs. Charles Groves*

THE NOTORIOUS MRS. EBBSMITH

THE FIRST ACT

The scene is a room in the Palazzo Arconati, on the Grand Canal, Venice. The room itself is beautiful in its decayed grandeur, but the furniture and hangings are either tawdry and meretricious or avowedly modern. The three windows at the back open on to a narrow, covered balcony, or loggia, and through them can be seen the west side of the canal. Between the recessed double doors, on either side of the room, is a fireplace out of use, and a marble mantelpiece, but a tiled stove is used for a wood fire. Breakfast things are laid on a table. The sun streams into the room.

ANTONIO POPPI *and* NELLA, *two Venetian servants, with a touch of the picturesque in their attire, are engaged in clearing the breakfast table.*

NELLA.

[*Turning her head.*] Ascolta! (Listen!)

ANTONIO.

Una gondola allo scalo. (A gondola at our steps.) [*They open the centre window; go out on to the balcony, and look down below.*] La Signora Thorpe. (The Signora Thorpe.)

NELLA.

Con suo fratello. (With her brother.)



ANTONIO.

[*Calling.*] Buon di, Signor Winterfield! Iddio la benedica! (Good day, Signor Winterfield! The blessing of God be upon you!)

NELLA.

[*Calling.*] Buon di, Signora! La Madonna l' assista! (Good day, Signora! May the Virgin have you in her keeping!)

ANTONIO.

[*Returning to the room.*] Noi siamo in ritardo di tutto questa mattina. (We are behindhand with everything this morning.)

NELLA.

[*Following him.*] È vero. (That is true.)

ANTONIO.

[*Bustling about.*] La stufa! (The stove!)

NELLA.

[*Throwing wood into the stove.*] Che tu sia benedetta per rammentarmelo! Questi Inglesi non si contentono del sole. (Bless you for remembering it! These English are not content with the sun.)

[*Leaving only a vase of flowers upon the table, they hurry out with the breakfast things. At the same moment,* FORTUNÉ, *a manservant, enters, showing in* MRS. THORPE *and the* REV. AMOS WINTERFIELD. GERTRUDE THORPE *is a pretty, honest-looking young woman of about seven and twenty. She is in mourning, and has sorrowful eyes, and a complexion that is too delicate; but natural cheerfulness and brightness are seen through all.* AMOS *is about forty—big, burly, gruff; he is untidily dressed, and has a pipe in his hands.* FORTUNÉ *is carrying a pair of freshly cleaned, tan-coloured boots upon boot-trees.*



GERTRUDE.

Now, Fortuné, you ought to have told us downstairs that Dr. Kirke is with Mrs. Cleeve.

AMOS.

Come away, Gerty. Mrs. Cleeve can't want to be bored with us just now.

FORTUNÉ.

Mrs. Cleeve give 'er ordares she is always to be bored wiz Madame Thorpe and Mr. Winterfield.

AMOS.

Ha, ha!

GERTRUDE.

[*Smiling.*] Fortuné!

FORTUNÉ.

Besides, ze doctares vill go in 'alf a minute, you se

GERTRUDE.

Doctors!

AMOS.

What, is there another doctor with Dr. Kirke?

FORTUNÉ.

Ze great physician, Sir Brodrick.

GERTRUDE.

Sir George Brodrick? Amos!

AMOS.

Doesn't Mr. Cleve feel so well?

FORTUNÉ.

Oh, yes. But Mrs. Cleeve 'appen to read in a newspapare zat Sir George Brodrick vas in Florence for ze Pâque—ze

Eastare. Sir Brodrick vas Mr. Cleeve's doctare in London, Mrs. Cleeve tell me, so 'e is acquainted wiz Mr. Cleeve's inside.

AMOS.

Ho, ho!

GERTRUDE.

Mr. Cleeve's constitution, Fortuné.

FORTUNÉ.

Excuse, madame. Zerefore Mrs. Cleeve she telegraph Sir Brodrick to come to Venise.

AMOS.

To consult with Dr. Kirke, I suppose.

FORTUNÉ.

[*Listening.*] 'Ere is ze doctares.

[DR. KIRKE *enters, followed by* SIR GEORGE BRODRICK. KIRKE *is a shabby, snuff-taking old gentleman—blunt, but kind;* SIR GEORGE, *on the contrary, is scrupulously neat in his dress, and has a suave, professional manner.* FORTUNÉ *withdraws.*

KIRKE.

Good-morning, Mr. Winterfield. [*To* GERTRUDE.] How do you do, my dear? You're getting some colour into your pretty face, I'm glad to see. [*To* SIR GEORGE.] Mr. Winterfield—Sir George Brodrick.

[SIR GEORGE *and* AMOS *shake hands.*

KIRKE.

[*To* SIR GEORGE.] Mrs. Thorpe. [SIR GEORGE *shakes hands with* GERTRUDE.] Sir George and I started life together in London years ago; now he finds me here in Venice —well, we can't all win the race, eh?



SIR GEORGE.

My dear old friend! [*To* GERTRUDE.] Mr. Cleeve has been telling me, Mrs. Thorpe, how exceedingly kind you and your brother have been to him during his illness.

GERTRUDE.

Oh, Mr. Cleeve exaggerates our little services.

AMOS.

I've done nothing.

GERTRUDE.

Nor I.

KIRKE.

Now, my dear!

GERTRUDE.

Dr. Kirke, you weren't in Florence with us; you're only a tale-bearer.

KIRKE.

Well, I've excellent authority for my story of a young woman who volunteered to share the nursing of an invalid at a time when she herself stood greatly in need of being nursed.

GERTRUDE.

Nonsense! [*To* SIR GEORGE.] You know, Amos—my big brother over there—Amos and I struck up an acquaintance with Mr. and Mrs. Cleeve at Florence, at the Hotel d'Italie, and occasionally one of us would give Mr. Cleeve his dose while poor Mrs. Cleeve took a little rest or a drive —but positively that's all.

KIRKE.

You don't tell us—

GERTRUDE.

I've nothing more to tell, except that I'm awfully fond of Mrs. Cleeve—



AMOS.

Oh, if you once get my sister on the subject of Mrs. Cleeve—[*Taking up a newspaper.*]

GERTRUDE.

[*To* SIR GEORGE.] Yes, I always say that if I were a man searching for a wife, I should be inclined to base my ideal on Mrs. Cleeve.

SIR GEORGE.

[*Edging away towards* KIRKE, *with a surprised, uncomfortable smile.*] Eh? Really?

GERTRUDE.

You conceive a different ideal, Sir George?

SIR GEORGE.

Oh—well—

GERTRUDE.

Well, Sir George?

AMOS.

Perhaps Sir George has heard that Mrs. Cleeve holds regrettable opinions on some points. If so, he may feel surprised that a parson's sister—

GERTRUDE.

Oh, I don't share all Mrs. Cleeve's views, or sympathize with them, of course. But they succeed only in making me sad and sorry. Mrs. Cleeve's opinions don't stop me from loving the gentle, sweet woman; admiring her for her patient, absorbing devotion to her husband; wondering at the beautiful stillness with which she seems to glide through life!—

AMOS.

[*Putting down the newspaper; to* SIR GEORGE *and* KIRKE.] I told you so! [*To* GERTRUDE.] Gertrude, I'm



sure Sir George and Dr. Kirke want to be left together for a few minutes.

GERTRUDE.

[*Going up to the window.*] I'll sun myself on the balcony.

AMOS.

And I'll go and buy some tobacco. [*To* GERTRUDE.] Don't be long, Gerty. [*Nodding to* SIR GEORGE *and* KIRKE.] Good-morning.

[*They return his nod, and he goes out.*

GERTRUDE.

[*On the balcony outside the window to* KIRKE *and* SIR GEORGE.] Dr. Kirke, I've heard what doctors' consultations consist of. After looking at the pictures you talk about whist.

[*She closes the window and sits.*

KIRKE.

[*Producing his snuff-box.*] Ha, ha!

SIR GEORGE.

Why, this lady and her brother evidently haven't the faintest suspicion of the actual truth, my dear Kirke!

KIRKE.

[*Taking snuff.*] Not the slightest.

SIR GEORGE.

The woman made a point of being extremely explicit with you, you tell me?

KIRKE.

Yes; she was plain enough with me. At our first meeting



she said, "Doctor, I want you to know so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so."

SIR GEORGE.

Really? Well, it certainly isn't fair of Cleeve and his—his associate to trick decent people like Mrs. Thorpe and her brother. Good gracious, the brother is a clergyman, too!

KIRKE.

The rector of some dull hole in the north of England.

SIR GEORGE.

Really?

KIRKE.

A bachelor; this Mrs. Thorpe keeps house for him. She's a widow.

SIR GEORGE.

Really?

KIRKE.

Widow of a captain in the army. Poor thing! She's lately lost her only child, and can't get over it.

SIR GEORGE.

Indeed, really, really? . . . But about Cleeve now—he had Roman fever of rather a severe type?

KIRKE.

In November. And then that fool of a Bickerstaff at Rome allowed the woman to move him to Florence too soon, and there he had a relapse. However, when she brought him on here the man was practically well.

SIR GEORGE.

The difficulty being to convince him of the fact, eh? A highly strung, emotional creature?

KIRKE.

You've hit him.

SIR GEORGE.

I've known him from his childhood. Are you still giving him anything?

KIRKE.

A little quinine, to humour him.

SIR GEORGE.

Exactly. [*Looking at his watch.*] Where is she, where is she? I've promised to take my wife shopping in the Merceria this morning. By-the-bye, Kirke,—I must talk scandal, I find,—*this* is rather an odd circumstance. Whom do you think I got a bow from as I passed through the hall of the Danieli last night? [KIRKE *grunts and shakes his head.*] The Duke of St. Olpherts.

KIRKE.

[*Taking snuff.*] Ah! I suppose you're in with a lot of swells now, Brodrick.

SIR GEORGE.

No, no, you don't understand me. The duke is this young fellow's uncle by marriage. His Grace married a sister of Lady Cleeve's, of Cleeve's mother, you know.

KIRKE.

Oh! This looks as if the family are trying to put a finger in the pie.

SIR GEORGE.

The duke may be here by mere chance. Still, as you say, it does look— [*Lowering his voice as* KIRKE *rises, eyes an opening door.*] Who's that?



KIRKE.

The woman.

[AGNES *enters. She moves firmly but noiselessly—a placid woman with a sweet, low voice. Her dress is plain to the verge of coarseness; her face, which has little colour, is at the first glance almost wholly unattractive.*

AGNES.

[*Looking from one to the other.*] I thought you would send for me perhaps. [*To* SIR GEORGE.] What do you say about him?

KIRKE.

One moment. [*Pointing to the balcony.*] Mrs. Thorpe—

AGNES.

Excuse me.

[*She goes to the window and opens it.*

GERTRUDE.

O Mrs. Cleeve! [*Entering the room.*] Am I in the way?

AGNES.

You are never that, dear. Run along to my room; I'll call you in a minute or two. [GERTRUDE *nods and goes to the door.*] Take off your hat and sit with me a little while.

GERTRUDE.

I'll stay for a bit, but this hat doesn't take off.

[*She goes out.*

AGNES.

[*To* SIR GEORGE *and* KIRKE.] Yes?

SIR GEORGE.

We are glad to be able to give a most favourable report.



I may say that Mr. Cleeve has never appeared to be in better health.

AGNES.

[*Drawing a deep breath.*] He will be very much cheered by what you say.

SIR GEORGE.

[*Bowing stiffly.*] I'm glad—

AGNES.

His illness left him with a morbid, irrational impression that he would never be quite his former self again.

SIR GEORGE.

A nervous man recovering from a scare. I've helped to remove that impression, I believe.

AGNES.

Thank you. We have a troublesome, perhaps a hard time before us; we both need all our health and spirits. [*Turning her head, listening.*] Lucas?

[LUCAS *enters the room. He is a handsome, intellectual-looking young man of about eight and twenty.*

LUCAS.

[*To* AGNES, *excitedly.*] Have you heard what they say of me?

AGNES.

[*Smiling.*] Yes.

LUCAS.

How good of you, Sir George, to break up your little holiday for the sake of an anxious, fidgety fellow. [*To* AGNES.] Isn't it?

AGNES.

Sir George has rendered us a great service.



LUCAS.

[*Going to* KIRKE, *brightly.*] Yes, and proved how ungrateful I've been to you, doctor.

KIRKE.

Don't apologize. People who don't know when they're well are the mainstay of my profession. [*Offering snuff-box.*] Here—

[LUCAS *takes a pinch of snuff, laughingly.*

AGNES.

[*In a low voice to* SIR GEORGE.] He has been terribly hipped at times. [*Taking up the vase of flowers from the table.*] Your visit will have made him another man.

[*She goes to a table, puts down the vase upon the tray, and commences to cut and arrange the fresh flowers she finds there.*

LUCAS.

[*Seeing that* AGNES *is out of hearing.*] Excuse me, Kirke—just for one moment. [*To* SIR GEORGE.] Sir George— [KIRKE *joins* AGNES.] You still go frequently to Great Cumberland Place?

SIR GEORGE.

Your mother's gout has been rather stubborn lately.

LUCAS.

Very likely she and my brother Sandford will get to hear of your visit to me here; in that case you'll be questioned pretty closely, naturally.

SIR GEORGE.

My position is certainly a little delicate.



LUCAS.

Oh, you may be perfectly open with my people as to my present mode of life. Only—[*he motions* SIR GEORGE *to be seated; they sit facing each other*] only I want you to hear me declare again plainly [*looking towards* AGNES] that but for the care and devotion of that good woman over there, but for the solace of that woman's companionship, I should have been dead months ago; I should have died raving in my awful bedroom on the ground-floor of that foul Roman hotel. Malarial fever, of course! Doctors don't admit—do they?—that it is possible for strong men to die of miserable marriages. And yet I was dying in Rome, I truly believe, from *my* bitter, crushing disappointment, from the consciousness of my wretched, irretrievable—

[FORTUNÉ *enters carrying* LUCAS'S *hat, gloves, overcoat, and silk wrap, and, upon a salver, a bottle of medicine and a glass.*

LUCAS.

[*Sharply.*] Qu'y a-t-il, Fortuné?

FORTUNÉ.

Sir, you 'ave an appointment.

LUCAS.

[*Rising.*] At the Danieli at eleven. Is it so late?

[FORTUNÉ *places the things upon the table.* LUCAS *puts the wrap round his throat.* AGNES, *who has turned on* FORTUNÉ'S *entrance, goes to* LUCAS *and arranges the wrap for him solicitously.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*Rising.*] I have to meet Lady Brodrick at the Piazzetta. Let me take you in my gondola.



LUCAS.

Thanks, delighted.

AGNES.

[*To* SIR GEORGE.] I would rather Lucas went in the house gondola: I know its cushions are dry. May he take you to the Piazzetta?

SIR GEORGE.

[*A little stiffly.*] Certainly.

AGNES.

[*To* FORTUNÉ.] Mettez les coussins dans la gondole.

FORTUNÉ.

Bien, madame.

[FORTUNÉ *goes out.* AGNES *begins to measure a dose of medicine.*

SIR GEORGE.

[*To* AGNES.] Er—I—ah—

LUCAS.

[*Putting on his gloves.*] Agnes, Sir George—

AGNES.

[*Turning to* SIR GEORGE, *the bottle and glass in her hands.*] Yes?

SIR GEORGE.

[*Constrainedly.*] We always make a point of acknowledging the importance of nursing as an aid to medical treatment. I—I am sure Mr. Cleeve owes you much in that respect.

AGNES.

Thank you.

SIR GEORGE.

[*To* LUCAS.] I have to discharge my gondola; you'll find me at the steps, Cleeve. [AGNES *shifts the medicine bottle from one hand to the other so that her right hand may be free, but* SIR GEORGE *simply bows in a formal way and moves towards the door.*] You are coming with us, Kirke?

KIRKE.

Yes.

SIR GEORGE.

Do you mind seeing that I'm not robbed by my gondolier? [*He goes out.*

AGNES.

[*Giving the medicine to* LUCAS, *undisturbed.*] Here, dear.

KIRKE.

[*To* AGNES.] May I pop in to-night for my game of chess?

AGNES.

Do, doctor; I shall be very pleased.

KIRKE.

[*Shaking her hand in a marked way.*] Thank you.

[*He follows* SIR GEORGE.

AGNES.

[*Looking after him.*] Liberal little man.

[*She has* LUCAS'S *overcoat in her hand; a small pen-and-ink drawing of a woman's head drops from one of the pockets. They pick it up together.*

AGNES.

Isn't that the sketch you made of me in Florence?



LUCAS.

[*Replacing it in the coat pocket.*] Yes.

AGNES.

You are carrying it about with you?

LUCAS.

I slipped it into my pocket thinking it might interest the duke.

AGNES.

[*Assisting him with his overcoat.*] Surely I am too obnoxious in the abstract for your uncle to entertain such a detail as a portrait.

LUCAS.

It struck me it might serve to correct certain preconceived notions of my people's.

AGNES.

Images of a beautiful temptress with peach-blossom cheeks and stained hair?

LUCAS.

That's what I mean; I assume they suspect a decline of taste on my part of that sort. Good-by, dear.

AGNES.

Is this mission of the Duke of St. Olpherts the final attempt to part us, I wonder? [*Angrily, her voice hardening.*] Why should they harass and disturb you as they do?

LUCAS.

[*Kissing her.*] Nothing disturbs me now that I *know* I am strong and well. Besides everybody will soon tire of being shocked. Even conventional morality must grow breathless in the chase.

[*He leaves her. She opens the door and calls.*



AGNES.

Mrs. Thorpe! I'm alone now.

[*She goes on to the balcony through the centre window, and looks down below.* GERTRUDE *enters and joins her.*

GERTRUDE.

How well your husband is looking!

AGNES.

Sir George Brodrick pronounces him quite recovered.

GERTRUDE.

Isn't that splendid! [*Waving her hand and calling.*] Buon giorno, Signor Cleeve! Come molto meglio voi state! [*Leaving the balcony, laughing.*] Ha, ha! my Italian!

[AGNES *waves finally to the gondola below, returns to the room, and slips her arm through* GERTRUDE'S.

AGNES.

Two whole days since I've seen you.

GERTRUDE.

They've been two of my bad days, dear.

AGNES.

[*Looking into her face.*] All right now?

GERTRUDE.

Oh, "God's in His heaven" this morning! When the sun's out I feel that my little boy's bed in Ketherick Cemetery is warm and cosy.

AGNES.

[*Patting* GERTRUDE'S *hand.*] Ah!—



GERTRUDE.

The weather's the same all over Europe, according to the papers. Do you think it's really going to settle at last? To me these chilly, showery nights are terrible. You know, I still tuck my child up at night-time, still have my last peep at him before going to my own bed; and it is awful to listen to these cold rains—drip, drip, drip upon that little green coverlet of his!

[*She goes and stands by the window silently.*

AGNES.

This isn't strong of you, dear Mrs. Thorpe. You mustn't —you mustn't.

[AGNES *brings the tray with the cut flowers to the nearer table; calmly and methodically she resumes trimming the stalks.*

GERTRUDE.

You're quite right. That's over. Now, then, I'm going to gabble for five minutes gaily. [*Settling herself comfortably in an armchair.*] What jolly flowers you've got there! What have you been doing with yourself? Amos took me to the Caffè Quadri yesterday to late breakfast, to cheer me up. Oh, I've something to say to you! At the Caffè, at the next table to ours, there were three English people—two men and a girl—home from India, I gathered. One of the men was looking out of the window, quizzing the folks walking in the Piazza, and suddenly he caught sight of your husband. [AGNES's *hands pause in their work.*] "I do believe that's Lucas Cleeve," he said. And then the girl had a peep, and said, "Certainly it is." And the man said, "I must find out where he's stopping; if Minerva is with him, you must call." "Who's Minerva?" said the second man. "Minerva is Mrs. Lucas Cleeve," the girl said; "it's a pet-name—he married a chum of mine, a daughter of



Sir John Steyning's, a year or so after I went out." [*Rising and coming down.*] Excuse me, dear. Do these people really know you and your husband, or were they talking nonsense?

[AGNES *takes the vase of faded flowers, goes on to the balcony and empties the contents of the vase into the canal. Then she stands by the window, her back towards* GERTRUDE.

AGNES.

No; they evidently know Mr. Cleeve.

GERTRUDE.

Your husband never calls you by that pet-name of yours. Why is it you haven't told me you're a daughter of Admiral Steyning's?

AGNES.

Mrs. Thorpe—

GERTRUDE.

[*Warmly.*] Oh, I must say what I mean! I have often pulled myself up short in my gossips with you, conscious of a sort of wall between us. [AGNES *comes slowly from the window.*] Somehow, I feel now that you haven't in the least made a friend of me. I'm hurt. It's stupid of me; I can't help it.

AGNES.

[*After a moment's pause.*] I am not the lady these people were speaking of yesterday.

GERTRUDE.

Not?—

AGNES.

Mr. Cleeve is no longer with his wife; he has left her.

GERTRUDE.

Left—his wife!



AGNES.

Like yourself, I am a widow. I don't know whether you've ever heard my name—Ebbsmith. [GERTRUDE *stares at her blankly.*] I beg your pardon sincerely. I never meant to conceal my true position; such a course is opposed to every principle of mine. But I grew so attached to you in Florence and—well, it was contemptibly weak; I'll never do such a thing again.

[*She goes back to the table and commences to refill the vase with the fresh flowers.*

GERTRUDE.

When you say that Mr. Cleeve has left his wife, I suppose you mean to tell me you have taken her place?

AGNES.

Yes, I mean that.

[GERTRUDE *rises and walks to the door.*

GERTRUDE.

[*At the door.*] You knew that I could not speak to you again after hearing this?

AGNES.

I thought it almost certain you would not.

[*After a moment's irresolution,* GERTRUDE *returns, and stands by the settee.*

GERTRUDE.

I can hardly believe you.

AGNES.

I should like you to hear more than just the bare facts.

GERTRUDE.

[*Drumming on the back of the settee.*] Why don't you tell me more?



AGNES.

You were going, you know.

GERTRUDE.

[*Sitting.*] I won't go quite like that. Please tell me.

AGNES.

[*Calmly.*] Well, did you ever read of John Thorold—"Jack Thorold, the demagogue"? [GERTRUDE *shakes her head.*] I daresay not. John Thorold, once a school-master, was my father. In my time he used to write for the two or three so-called inflammatory journals, and hold forth in small lecture halls, occasionally even from the top of a wooden stool in the Park, upon trade and labour questions, division of wealth, and the rest of it. He believed in nothing that people who go to church are credited with believing in, Mrs. Thorpe; his scheme for the re-adjustment of things was Force, his pet doctrine the ultimate healthy healing that follows the surgery of revolution. But to me he was the gentlest creature imaginable; and I was very fond of him, in spite of his—as I then thought—strange ideas. Strange ideas! Hah, many of 'em luckily don't sound quite so irrational to-day!

GERTRUDE.

[*Under her breath.*] Oh!—

AGNES.

My home was a wretched one. If dad was violent out of the house, mother was violent enough in it; with her it was rave, sulk, storm, from morning till night; till one day father turned a deaf ear to mother and died in his bed. That was my first intimate experience of the horrible curse that falls upon so many.

GERTRUDE.

Curse?



AGNES.

The curse of unhappy marriage. Though really I'd looked on at little else all my life. Most of our married friends were cursed in a like way; and I remember taking an oath, when I was a mere child, that nothing should ever push me over into the choked-up, seething pit. Fool! When I was nineteen I was gazing like a pet sheep into a man's eyes; and one morning I was married, at St. Andrew's Church in Holborn, to Mr. Ebbsmith, a barrister.

GERTRUDE.

In church?

AGNES.

Yes, in church—in church. In spite of father's unbelief and mother's indifference, at the time I married I was as simple—ay, in my heart as devout—as any girl in a parsonage. The other thing hadn't soaked into me. Whenever I could escape from our stifling rooms at home, and slam the front door behind me, the air blew away uncertainty and scepticism; I seemed only to have to take a long, deep breath to be full of hope and faith. And it was like this till that man married me.

GERTRUDE.

Of course, I guess your marriage was an unfortunate one.

AGNES.

It lasted eight years. For about twelve months he treated me like a woman in a harem, for the rest of the time like a beast of burden. Oh! when I think of it! [*Wiping her brow with her handkerchief.*] Phew!

GERTRUDE.

It changed you?

AGNES.

Oh, yes, it changed me.



GERTRUDE.

You spoke of yourself just now as a widow. He's dead?

AGNES.

He died on our wedding-day—the eighth anniversary.

GERTRUDE.

You were free then—free to begin again.

AGNES.

Eh? [*Looking at* GERTRUDE.] Yes, but you don't begin to believe all over again. [*She gathers up the stalks of the flowers from the tray, and, kneeling, crams them into the stove.*] However, this is an old story. I'm thirty-three now.

GERTRUDE.

[*Hesitatingly.*] You and Mr. Cleeve?—

AGNES.

We've known each other since last November, no longer. Six years of my life unaccounted for, eh? Well, for a couple of years or so I was lecturing.

GERTRUDE.

Lecturing?

AGNES.

Ah, I'd become an out-and-out child of my father by that time—spouting perhaps you'd call it, standing on the identical little platforms he used to speak from, lashing abuses with my tongue as he had done. Oh, and I was fond, too, of warning women.

GERTRUDE.

Against what?

AGNES.

Falling into the pit.

GERTRUDE.

Marriage?

AGNES.

The choked-up, seething pit—until I found my bones almost through my skin, and my voice too weak to travel across a room.

GERTRUDE.

From what cause?

AGNES.

Starvation, my dear. So, after lying in a hospital for a month or two, I took up nursing for a living. Last November I was sent for by Dr. Bickerstaff to go through to Rome to look after a young man who'd broken down there; and who declined to send for his friends. My patient was Mr. Cleeve—[*taking up the tray*] and that's where his fortunes join mine.

[*She crosses the room and puts the tray upon the cabinet.*

GERTRUDE.

And yet, judging from what that girl said yesterday, Mr. Cleeve married quite recently?

AGNES.

Less than three years ago. Men don't suffer as patiently as women. In many respects his marriage story is my own reversed—the man in place of the woman. I endured my hell, though; he broke the gates of his.

GERTRUDE.

I have often seen Mr. Cleeve's name in the papers. His future promised to be brilliant, didn't it?

AGNES.

[*Tidying the table, folding the newspapers, etc.*] There's a great career for him still.



GERTRUDE.

In Parliament—*now?*

AGNES.

No; he abandons that and devotes himself to writing. We shall write much together, urging our views on this subject of Marriage. We shall have to be poor, I expect, but we shall be content.

GERTRUDE.

Content!

AGNES.

Quite content. Don't judge us by my one piece of cowardly folly in keeping the truth from you, Mrs. Thorpe. Indeed, it's our great plan to live the life we have mapped out for ourselves, fearlessly, openly; faithful to each other, helpful to each other, for as long as we remain together.

GERTRUDE.

But tell me—you don't know how—how I have liked you!—tell me, if Mr. Cleeve's wife divorces him he will marry you?

AGNES.

No.

GERTRUDE.

No!

AGNES.

No. I haven't made you quite understand—Lucas and I don't desire to marry, in your sense.

GERTRUDE.

But you are devoted to each other!

AGNES.

Thoroughly.



GERTRUDE.

What, is that the meaning of "for as long as you are together"! You would go your different ways if ever you found that one of you was making the other unhappy?

AGNES.

I do mean that. We remain together only to help, to heal, to console. Why should men and women be so eager to grant to each other the power of wasting life? That is what marriage gives—the right to destroy years and years of life. And the right once given, it *attracts, attracts!* We have both suffered from it. So many rich years of my life have been squandered by it. And out of his life, so much force, energy—spent in battling with the shrew, the termagant he has now fled from; strength never to be replenished, never to be repaid—all wasted, wasted!

GERTRUDE.

Your legal marriage with him might not bring further miseries.

AGNES.

Too late! We have done with Marriage; we distrust it. We are not now among those who regard Marriage as indispensable to union. We have done with it!

GERTRUDE.

[*Advancing to her.*] You know, it would be impossible for me, if I would do so, to deceive my brother as to all this.

AGNES.

Why, of course, dear.

GERTRUDE.

[*Looking at her watch.*] Amos must be wondering—



AGNES.

Run away, then.

[GERTRUDE *crosses quickly towards the door.*

GERTRUDE.

[*Retracing a step or two.*] Shall I see you?—Oh!

AGNES.

[*Shaking her head.*] Ah!

GERTRUDE.

[*Going to her constrainedly.*] When Amos and I have talked this over, perhaps—perhaps—

AGNES.

No, no, I fear not. Come, my dear friend, [*with a smile*] give me a shake of the hand.

GERTRUDE.

[*Taking her hand.*] What you've told me is dreadful. [*Looking into* AGNES'S *face.*] And yet you're not a wicked woman! [*Kissing* AGNES.] In case we don't meet again.

[*The women separate quickly, looking towards the door as* LUCAS *enters.*

LUCAS.

[*Shaking hands with* GERTRUDE.] How do you do, Mrs. Thorpe? I've just had a wave of the hand from your brother.

GERTRUDE.

Where is he?

LUCAS.

On his back in a gondola, a pipe in his mouth as usual,



gazing skywards. [*Going on to the balcony.*] He's within hail.

[GERTRUDE *goes quickly to the door, followed by* AGNES.

LUCAS.

There! by the Palazzo Sforza.

[*He re-enters the room;* GERTRUDE *has disappeared.*

LUCAS.

[*Going towards the door.*] Let me get hold of him, Mrs. Thorpe.

AGNES.

[*Standing before* LUCAS, *quietly.*] She knows, Lucas, dear.

LUCAS.

Does she?

AGNES.

She overheard some gossip at the Caffè Quadria yesterday, and began questioning me, so I told her.

LUCAS.

[*Taking off his coat.*] Adieu to them, then, eh?

AGNES.

[*Assisting him.*] Adieu.

LUCAS.

I intended to write to the brother directly they had left Venice, to explain.

AGNES.

Your describing me as "Mrs. Cleeve" at the hotel in Florence helped to lead us into this; after we move from here, I must always be, frankly, "Mrs. Ebbsmith."



LUCAS.

These were decent people. You and she had formed quite an attachment.

AGNES.

Yes.

[*She places his coat, etc., on a chair, then fetches her work-basket from the cabinet.*

LUCAS.

There's something of the man in your nature, Agnes.

AGNES.

I've anathematized my womanhood often enough.

[*She sits at the table, taking out her work composedly.*

LUCAS.

Not that every man possesses the power you have acquired—the power of going through life with compressed lips.

AGNES.

[*Looking up smiling.*] *A propos?*

LUCAS.

These people—this woman you've been so fond of. You see them shrink away with the utmost composure.

AGNES.

[*Threading a needle.*] You forget, dear, that you and I have prepared ourselves for a good deal of this sort of thing.

LUCAS.

Certainly, but at the moment—



AGNES.

One must take care that the regret lasts no longer than a moment. Have you seen your uncle?

LUCAS.

A glimpse. He hadn't long risen.

AGNES.

He adds sluggishness to other vices, then?

LUCAS.

[*Lighting a cigarette.*] He greeted me through six inches of open door. His toilet has its mysteries.

AGNES.

A stormy interview?

LUCAS.

The reverse. He grasped my hand warmly, declared I looked the picture of health, and said it was evident I had been most admirably nursed.

AGNES.

[*Frowning.*] That's a strange utterance. But he's an eccentric, isn't he?

LUCAS.

No man has ever been quite satisfied as to whether his oddities are ingrained or affected.

AGNES.

No man. What about women?

LUCAS.

Ho, they have had opportunities of closer observation.

AGNES.

Hah! And they report?—

LUCAS.

Nothing. They become curiously reticent.

AGNES.

[*Scornfully, as she is cutting a thread.*] These noblemen!

LUCAS.

[*Taking a packet of letters from his pocket.*] Finally he presented me with these, expressed a hope that he'd see much of me during the week, and dismissed me with a fervent God bless you.

AGNES.

[*Surprised.*] He remains here then?

LUCAS.

It seems so.

AGNES.

What are those, dear?

LUCAS.

The duke has made himself the bearer of some letters from friends. I've only glanced at them—reproaches—appeals—

AGNES.

Yes, I understand.

[*He sits looking through the letters impatiently, then tearing them up and throwing the pieces upon the table.*

LUCAS.

Lord Warminster—my godfather. "My dear boy. For God's sake!"—[*Tearing up the letter and reading another.*]



Sir Charles Littlecote. "Your brilliant future . . . blasted. . . ." [*Another letter.*] Lord Froom. "Promise of a useful political career unfulfilled . . . cannot an old friend . . . ?" [*Another letter.*] Edith Heytesbury. I didn't notice a woman had honoured me. [*In an undertone.*] Edie!—[*Slipping the letter into his pocket and opening another.*] Jack Brophy. "Your great career"—Major Leete. "Your career"—[*Destroying the rest of the letters without reading them.*] My career! my career! That's the chorus, evidently. Well, there goes my career!

[*She lays her work aside and goes to him.*

AGNES.

Your career? [*Pointing to the destroyed letters.*] True, that one is over. But there's the other, you know—*ours.*

LUCAS.

[*Touching her hand.*] Yes, yes. Still, it's just a little saddening, the saying good-by [*disturbing the scraps of paper*] to all this.

AGNES.

Saddening, dear? Why, this political career of yours—think what it would have been at best! Accident of birth sent you to the wrong side of the House, influence of family would always have kept you there.

LUCAS.

[*Partly to himself.*] But I made my mark. I did make my mark.

AGNES.

Supporting the Party that retards; the Party that preserves for the rich, palters with the poor. [*Pointing to the letters again.*] Oh, there's not much to mourn for there.

LUCAS.

Still it was—success.



AGNES.

Success!

LUCAS.

I was talked about, written about, as a Coming Man—*the* Coming Man!

AGNES.

How many "coming men" has one known! Where on earth do they all go to?

LUCAS.

Ah, yes, but I allowed for the failures and carefully set myself to discover the causes of them. And, as I put my finger upon the causes and examined them, I congratulated myself and said, "Well, I haven't *that* weak point in my armour, or *that;*" and, Agnes, at last I was fool enough to imagine I had no weak point, none whatever.

AGNES.

It was weak enough to believe that.

LUCAS.

I couldn't foresee that I was doomed to pay the price all nervous men pay for success; that the greater my success became, the more cancer-like grew the fear of never being able to continue it, to excel it; that the triumph of to-day was always to be the torture of to-morrow! Oh, Agnes, the agony of success to a nervous, sensitive man; the dismal apprehension that fills his life and gives each victory a voice to cry out, "Hear! hear! Bravo, bravo, bravo! but this is to be your last—you'll never overtop it!" Ha, yes! I soon found out the weak spot in my armour—the need of constant encouragement, constant reminder of my powers; [*taking her hand*] the need of that subtle sympathy which a sacrificing, unselfish woman alone possesses the secret of. [*Rising.*] Well, my very weakness might have been a source of greatness if, three years ago, it had been to such a woman



that I had bound myself—a woman of your disposition; instead of to!—Ah!—

[*She lays her hand upon his arm soothingly.*

LUCAS.

Yes, yes, [*taking her in his arms.*] I know I have such a companion now.

AGNES.

Yes—now—

LUCAS.

You must be everything to me, Agnes—a double faculty, as it were. When my confidence in myself is shaken, you must try to keep the consciousness of my poor powers alive in me.

AGNES.

I shall not fail you in that, Lucas.

LUCAS.

And yet, whenever disturbing recollections come uppermost, when I catch myself mourning for those lost opportunities of mine; it is your love that must grant me oblivion —[*kissing her upon the lips*] your love!

[*She makes no response, and, after a pause, gently releases herself and retreats a step or two.*

LUCAS.

[*His eyes following her.*] Agnes, you seem to be changing towards me, growing colder to me. At times you seem to positively shrink from me. I don't understand it. Yesterday I thought I saw you look at me as if I—frightened you!

AGNES.

Lucas—Lucas dear, for some weeks, now, I've wanted to say this to you.



LUCAS.

What?

AGNES.

Don't you think that such a union as ours would be much braver, much more truly courageous, if it could but be—be—

LUCAS.

If it could but be—what?

AGNES.

[*Averting her eyes.*] Devoid of passion, if passion had no share in it.

LUCAS.

Surely this comes a little late, Agnes, between you and me.

AGNES.

[*Leaning upon the back of a chair, staring before her, and speaking in a low, steady voice.*] What has been was inevitable, I suppose. Still, we have hardly yet set foot upon the path we've agreed to follow. It is not too late for us, in our own lives, to put the highest interpretation upon that word—Love. Think of the inner sustaining power it would give us! [*More forcibly.*] We agree to go through the world together, preaching the lessons taught us by our experiences. We cry out to all people, "Look at us! Man and woman who are in the bondage of neither law nor ritual! Linked simply by mutual trust! Man and wife, but something better than man and wife! Friends, but even something better than friends!" I say there is that which is noble, finely defiant, in the future we have mapped out for ourselves, if only—if only—

LUCAS.

Yes!



AGNES.

[*Turning from him.*] If only it could be free from passion!

LUCAS.

[*In a low voice.*] Yes, but—is that possible?

AGNES.

[*In the same tone, watching him askance, a frightened look in her eyes.*] Why not?

LUCAS.

Young man and woman . . . youth and love . . . ? Scarcely upon this earth, my dear Agnes, such a life as you have pictured.

AGNES.

I say it can be, it can be!—

[FORTUNÉ *enters, carrying a letter, upon a salver, and a beautiful bouquet of white flowers. He hands the note to* LUCAS.

LUCAS.

[*Taking the note, glancing at* AGNES.] Eh! [*To* FORTUNÉ, *pointing to the bouquet.*] Qu'avez-vous là?

FORTUNÉ.

Ah, excuse. [*Presenting the bouquet to* AGNES.] Wiz compliment. [AGNES *takes the bouquet wonderingly.*] Tell Madame ze Duke of St. Olpherts bring it in person, 'e says.

LUCAS.

[*Opening the note.*] Est-il parti?

FORTUNÉ.

'E did not get out of 'is gondola.



LUCAS.

ı. [FORTUNÉ *withdraws. Reading the note aloud.*]
e brushing my hair, my dear boy, I became possessed
rong desire to meet the lady with whom you are now
'ing the shining hour. Why the devil shouldn't I,
'ant to! Without prejudice, as my lawyer says, let
rn-up this afternoon and chat pleasantly to her of
peare, also the musical glasses. Pray hand her this
truce—I mean my poor bunch of flowers—and be-
ıe yours, with a touch of gout, ST. OLPHERTS." [*In-
tly crushing the note.*] Ah!

AGNES.

›wning at the flowers.] A taste of the oddities, I
ɛ!

LUCAS.

is simply making sport of us. [*Going on to the bal-
nd looking out.*] There he is. Damn that smile of

AGNES.

:re? [*She joins him.*]

LUCAS.

h the two gondoliers.

AGNES.

'—that's a beautiful face! How strange!

LUCAS.

rwing her back into the room.] Come away. He is
; up at us.

AGNES.

you sure he sees us?



LUCAS.

He did.

AGNES.

He will want an answer—

[*She deliberately flings the bouquet over the balcony into the canal, then returns to the table and picks up her work.*

LUCAS.

[*Looking out again cautiously.*] He throws his head back and laughs heartily. [*Re-entering the room.*] Oh, of course, his policy is to attempt to laugh me out of my resolves. They send him here merely to laugh at me, Agnes, to laugh at me—[*coming to* AGNES *angrily*] laugh at me!

AGNES.

He must be a man of small resources. [*Threading her needle.*] It is so easy to mock.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.



THE SECOND ACT

The scene is the same as that of the previous act. Through the windows some mastheads and flapping sails are seen in the distance. The light is that of late afternoon.

AGNES, *very plainly dressed, is sitting at the table, industriously copying from a manuscript. After a moment or two,* ANTONIO *and* NELLA *enter the room, carrying a dressmaker's box which is corded and labelled.*

NELLA.

È permesso, Signora. (Permit us, Signora.)

ANTONIO.

Uno scatolone per la Signora. (An enormous box for the Signora.)

AGNES.

[*Turning her head.*] Eh?

NELLA.

È venuto colla ferrovia—(It has come by the railway—)

ANTONIO.

[*Consulting the label.*] Da Firenze. (From Florence.)

AGNES.

By railway, from Florence?

NELLA.

[*Reading from the label.*] "Emilia Bardini, Via Rondinelli."



AGNES.

Bardini? That's the dressmaker. There must be some mistake. Non è per me, Nella. (It isn't for me.)

[ANTONIO *and* NELLA *carry the box to her animatedly.*

NELLA.

Ma guardi, Signora. (But look, Signora!)

ANTONIO.

Alla Signora Cleeve!

NELLA.

E poi abbiamo pagato il porto della ferrovia. (Besides, we have paid the railway dues upon it.)

AGNES.

[*Collecting her sheets of paper.*] Hush, hush! don't trouble me just now. Mettez-la, n'importe où.

[*They place the box on another table.*

NELLA.

La corda intaccherebbe la forbice della Signora. Vuole che Antonio la tagli? (The cord would blunt the Signora's scissors. Shall Antonio cut the cord?)

AGNES.

[*Pinning her sheets of paper together.*] I'll see about it by and by. Laissez-moi!

NELLA.

[*Softly to* ANTONIO.] Taglia, taglia! (Cut, cut!)

[ANTONIO *produces a knife and cuts the cord, whereupon* NELLA *utters a little scream.*



AGNES.

[*Turning, startled.*] What is it?

NELLA.

[*Pushing* ANTONIO *away.*] Questo stupido non ha capito la Signora e ha tagliata la corda. (The stupid fellow misunderstood the Signora and has severed the cord.)

AGNES.

[*Rising.*] It doesn't matter. Be quiet!

NELLA.

[*Removing the lid from the box angrily.*] Ed ecco la scatola aperta contro voglia della Signora! (And now here is the box open against the Signora's wish!) [*Inquisitively pushing aside the paper which covers the contents of the box.*] Oh, Dio! Si vede tutto quel che vi è! (Oh, God, and all the contents exposed!)

[*When the paper is removed, some beautiful material trimmed with lace, etc., is seen.*

NELLA.

Guardi, guardi, Signora! (Signora, look, look!) [AGNES *examines the contents of the box with a puzzled air.*] Oh, che bellezza! (How beautiful!)

[LUCAS *enters.*

ANTONIO.

[*To* NELLA.] Il padrone. (The master.)

[NELLA *courtesies to* LUCAS, *then withdraws with* ANTONIO.

AGNES.

Lucas, the dressmaker in the Via Rondinelli at Florence —the woman who ran up the little gown I have on now—

LUCAS.

[*With a smile.*] What of her?

AGNES.

This has just come from her. Phuh! What does she mean by sending the showy thing to me?

LUCAS.

It is my gift to you.

AGNES.

[*Producing enough of the contents of the box to reveal a very handsome dress.*] This!

LUCAS.

I knew Bardini had your measurements; I wrote to her instructing her to make that. I remember Lady Heytesbury in something similar last season.

AGNES.

[*Examining the dress.*] A mere strap for the sleeve, and sufficiently *décolletée,* I should imagine.

LUCAS.

My dear Agnes, I can't understand your reason for trying to make yourself a plain-looking woman when nature intended you for a pretty one.

AGNES.

Pretty!

LUCAS.

[*Looking hard at her.*] You *are* pretty.

AGNES.

Oh, as a girl I may have been [*disdainfully*] pretty. What good did it do anybody? [*Fingering the dress with*



aversion.] And when would you have me hang this on my bones?

LUCAS.

Oh, when we are dining, or—

AGNES.

Dining in a public place?

LUCAS.

Why not look your best in a public place?

AGNES.

Look my best! You know, I don't think of this sort of garment in connection with our companionship, Lucas.

LUCAS.

It is not an extraordinary garment for a lady.

AGNES.

Rustle of silk, glare of arms and throat—they belong, in my mind, to such a very different order of things from that we have set up.

LUCAS.

Shall I appear before you in ill-made clothes, clumsy boots—

AGNES.

Why? We are just as we always have been, since we've been together. I don't tell you that your appearance is beginning to offend.

LUCAS.

Offend! Agnes, you—you pain me. I simply fail to understand why you should allow our mode of life to condemn you to perpetual slovenliness.



AGNES.

Slovenliness!

LUCAS.

No, no, shabbiness.

AGNES.

[*Looking down upon the dress she is wearing.*] Shabbiness!

LUCAS.

[*With a laugh.*] Forgive me, dear; I'm forgetting you are wearing a comparatively new afternoon gown.

AGNES.

At any rate, I'll make this brighter to-morrow with some trimmings, willingly. [*Pointing to the dressmaker's box.*] Then you won't insist on my decking myself out in rags of that kind, eh? There's something in the idea—I needn't explain.

LUCAS.

[*Fretfully.*] Insist! I'll not urge you again. [*Pointing to the box.*] Get rid of it somehow. Are you copying that manuscript of mine?

AGNES.

I had just finished it.

LUCAS.

Already! [*Taking up her copy.*] How beautifully you write! [*Going to her eagerly.*] What do you think of my Essay?

AGNES.

The subject bristles with truth; it's vital.

LUCAS.

My method of treating it?

AGNES.

Hardly a word out of place.

LUCAS.

[*Chilled.*] *Hardly* a word?

AGNES.

Not a word, in fact.

LUCAS.

No, dear, I daresay your "hardly" is nearer the mark.

AGNES.

I assure you it is brilliant, Lucas.

LUCAS.

What a wretch I am ever to find the smallest fault in you! Shall we dine out to-night?

AGNES.

As you wish, dear.

LUCAS.

At the Grünwald? [*He goes to the table to pick up his manuscript; when his back is turned she looks at her watch quickly.*] We'll solemnly toast this, shall we, in Montefiascone?

AGNES.

[*Eyeing him askance.*] You are going out for your chocolate this afternoon as usual, I suppose?

LUCAS.

Yes; but I'll look through your copy first, so that I can slip it into the post at once. You are not coming out?

AGNES.

Not till dinner-time.

LUCAS.

[*Kissing her on the forehead.*] I talked over the points



of this [*tapping the manuscript*] with a man this morning; he praised some of the phrases warmly.

AGNES.

A man? [*In an altered tone.*] The duke?

LUCAS.

Er—yes.

AGNES.

[*With assumed indifference, replacing the lid on the dressmaker's box.*] You have seen him again to-day, then?

LUCAS.

We strolled about together for half an hour on the Piazza.

AGNES.

[*Replacing the cord round the box.*] You—you don't dislike him as much as you did?

LUCAS.

He's somebody to chat to. I suppose one gets accustomed even to a man one dislikes.

AGNES.

[*Almost inaudibly.*] I suppose so.

LUCAS.

As a matter of fact, he has the reputation of being rather a pleasant companion; though I—I confess—I—I don't find him very entertaining.

[*He goes out. She stands staring at the door through which he has disappeared. There is a knock at the opposite door.*



AGNES.

[*Rousing herself.*] Fortuné! [*Raising her voice*] Fortuné!

[*The door opens and* GERTRUDE *enters hurriedly.*

GERTRUDE.

Fortuné is complacently smoking a cigarette in the Campo.

AGNES.

Mrs. Thorpe!

GERTRUDE.

[*Breathlessly.*] Mr. Cleeve is out, I conclude?

AGNES.

No. He is later than usual going out this afternoon.

GERTRUDE.

[*Irresolutely.*] I don't think I'll wait then.

AGNES.

But do tell me—you have been crossing the streets to avoid me during the past week—what has made you come to see me now?

GERTRUDE.

I would come. I've given poor Amos the slip; he believes I'm buying beads for the Ketherick school-children.

AGNES.

[*Shaking her head.*] Ah, Mrs. Thorpe!—

GERTRUDE.

Of course, it's perfectly brutal to be underhanded. But we're leaving for home to-morrow; I couldn't resist it.



AGNES.

[*Coldly.*] Perhaps I'm very ungracious—

GERTRUDE.

[*Taking* AGNES's *hand.*] The fact is, Mrs. Cleeve—oh, what do you wish me to call you?

AGNES.

[*Withdrawing her hand.*] Well, you're off to-morrow. Agnes will do.

GERTRUDE.

Thank you. The fact is, it's been a bad week with me—restless, fanciful. And I haven't been able to get you out of my head.

AGNES.

I'm sorry.

GERTRUDE.

Your story, your present life; you, yourself—such a contradiction to what you profess!—well, it all has a sort of fascination for me.

AGNES.

My dear, you're simply not sleeping again. [*Turning away.*] You'd better go back to the ammonia Kirke prescribed for you.

GERTRUDE.

[*Taking a card from her purse, with a little light laugh.*] You want to physic me, do you, after worrying my poor brain as you've done? [*Going to her.*] "The Rectory, Daleham, Ketherick Moor." Yorkshire, you know. There can be no great harm in your writing to me sometimes.

AGNES.

[*Refusing the card.*] No; under the circumstances I can't promise that.

GERTRUDE.

[*Wistfully.*] Very well.

AGNES.

[*Facing her.*] Oh, can't you understand that it can only be—disturbing to both of us for an impulsive, emotional creature like yourself to keep up acquaintanceship with a woman who takes life as I do? We'll drop each other, leave each other alone.

[*She walks away, and stands leaning* UPON *the stove, her back towards* GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE.

[*Replacing the card in her purse.*] As you please. Picture me, sometimes, in that big, hollow shell of a rectory at Ketherick, strolling about my poor dead little chap's empty room.

AGNES.

[*Under her breath.*] Oh!

GERTRUDE.

[*Turning to go.*] God bless you.

AGNES.

Gertrude! [*With altered manner.*] You—you have the trick of making me lonely also. [*Going to* GERTRUDE, *taking her hands, and fondling them.*] I'm tired of talking to the walls! And your blood is warm to me! Shall I tell you, or not—or not?

GERTRUDE.

Do tell me.

AGNES.

There is a man here, in Venice, who is torturing me—flaying me alive.



GERTRUDE.

Torturing you?

AGNES.

He came about a week ago; he is trying to separate us.

GERTRUDE.

You and Mr. Cleeve?

AGNES.

Yes.

GERTRUDE.

You are afraid he will succeed?

AGNES.

Succeed! What nonsense you talk!

GERTRUDE.

What upsets you then?

AGNES.

After all, it's difficult to explain—the feeling is so indefinite. It's like—something in the air. This man is influencing us both oddly. Lucas is as near illness again as possible; I can *hear* his nerves vibrating. And I—you know what a fish-like thing I am as a rule—just look at me now, as I'm speaking to you.

GERTRUDE.

But don't you and Mr. Cleeve—talk to each other?

AGNES.

As children do when the lights are put out—of everything but what's uppermost in their minds.

GERTRUDE.

You have met the man?



AGNES.

I intend to meet him.

GERTRUDE.

Who is he?

AGNES.

A relation of Lucas's—the Duke of St. Olpherts.

GERTRUDE.

He has right on his side then?

AGNES.

If you choose to think so.

GERTRUDE.

[*Deliberately.*] Supposing he *does* succeed in taking Mr. Cleeve away from you?

AGNES.

[*Staring at* GERTRUDE.] What, *now,* do you mean?

GERTRUDE.

Yes.

[*There is a brief pause; then* AGNES *walks across the room wiping her brow with her handkerchief.*

AGNES.

I tell you, that idea's—preposterous.

GERTRUDE.

Oh, I can't understand you!

AGNES.

You'll respect my confidence?



GERTRUDE.

Agnes!

AGNES.

[*Sitting.*] Well, I fancy this man's presence here has simply started me thinking of a time—oh, it may never come!—a time when I may cease to be—necessary to Mr. Cleeve. Do you understand?

GERTRUDE.

I remember what you told me of your being prepared to grant each other freedom if—

AGNES.

Yes, yes—and for the past few days this idea has filled me with a fear of the most humiliating kind.

GERTRUDE.

What fear?

AGNES.

The fear lest, after all my beliefs and protestations, I should eventually find myself loving Lucas in the helpless, common way of women—

GERTRUDE.

[*Under her breath.*] I see.

AGNES.

The dread that the moment may arrive some day when, should it be required of me, *I sha'n't feel myself able to give him up easily.* [*Her head drooping, uttering a low moan.*] Oh!—

[LUCAS, *dressed for going out, enters, carrying* AGNES'S *copy of his manuscript, rolled and addressed for the post.* AGNES *rises.*



AGNES.

[*To* LUCAS.] Mrs. Thorpe starts for home to-morrow; she has called to say good-by.

LUCAS.

[*To* GERTRUDE.] It is very kind. Is your good brother quite well?

GERTRUDE.

[*Embarrassed.*] Thanks, quite.

LUCAS.

[*Smiling.*] I believe I have added to his experience of the obscure corners of Venice, during the past week.

GERTRUDE.

I—I don't— Why?

LUCAS.

By so frequently putting him to the inconvenience of avoiding me.

GERTRUDE.

Oh, Mr. Cleeve, we—I—I—

LUCAS.

Please tell your brother I asked after him.

GERTRUDE.

I—I can't; he—doesn't know I've—I've—

LUCAS.

Ah! Really? [*With a bow.*] Good-by.

[*He goes out,* AGNES *accompanying him to the door.*

GERTRUDE.

[*To herself.*] Brute! [*To* AGNES.] Oh, I suppose Mr. Cleeve has made me look precisely as I feel.

AGNES.

How?

GERTRUDE.

Like people deserve to feel, who do godly, mean things.

[FORTUNÉ *appears.*

FORTUNÉ.

[*To* AGNES, *significantly.*] Mr. Cleeve 'as jus' gone out.

AGNES.

Vous savez, n'est-ce pas.

FORTUNÉ.

[*Glancing at* GERTRUDE.] But Madame is now engage.

GERTRUDE.

[*To* AGNES.] Oh, I am going.

AGNES.

[*To* GERTRUDE.] Wait. [*Softly to her.*] I want you to hear this little comedy. Fortuné shall repeat my instructions. [*To* FORTUNÉ.] Les ordres que je vous ai donnés, répétez-les.

FORTUNÉ.

[*Speaking in an undertone.*] On ze left 'and side of ze Campo—

AGNES.

Non, non—tout haut.

FORTUNÉ.

[*Aloud, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.*] On ze left 'and side of ze Campo—

AGNES.

Yes.

FORTUNÉ.

In one of ze doorways—between Fiorentini's and ze leetle lamp shop ze—ze—h'm—ze person.

AGNES.

Precisely. Dépêchez-vous. [FORTUNÉ *bows and retires.*] Fortuné flatters himself he is engaged in some horrid intrigue. You guess whom I am expecting?

GERTRUDE.

The duke?

AGNES.

[*Ringing a bell.*] I've written to him asking him to call upon me this afternoon while Lucas is at Florian's. [*Referring to her watch.*] He is to kick his heels about the Campo till I let him know I am alone.

GERTRUDE.

Will he obey you?

AGNES.

A week ago he was curious to see the sort of animal I am. If he holds off now I'll hit upon some other plan. I will come to close quarters with him, if only for five minutes.

GERTRUDE.

Good-by. [*They embrace, then walk together to the door.*] You still refuse my address?

AGNES.

You bat! Didn't you see me make a note of it?

GERTRUDE.

You!



AGNES.

[*Her hand on her heart.*] Here.

GERTRUDE.

[*Gratefully.*] Ah! [*She goes out.*

AGNES.

[*At the open door.*] Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.

[*Outside.*] Yes?

AGNES.

[*In a low voice.*] Remember, in my thoughts I pace that lonely little room of yours with you. [*As if to stop* GERTRUDE *from re-entering.*] Hush! No, no.

[*She closes the door sharply.* NELLA *appears.*

AGNES.

[*Pointing to the box on the table.*] Portez ce carton dans ma chambre.

NELLA.

[*Trying to peep into the box as she carries it.*] Signora, se Ella si mettesse questo magnifico abito! Oh! quanto sarebbe più bella! (Signora, if you were to wear this magnificent dress! Oh! how much more beautiful you would be!)

AGNES.

[*Listening.*] Sssh! Sssh! [NELLA *goes out.* FORTUNÉ *enters.*] Eh, bien?

[FORTUNÉ *glances over his shoulder. The* DUKE OF ST. OLPHERTS *enters; the wreck of a very handsome man, with delicate features, a transparent complexion, a polished manner, and a smooth, weary voice.*



He limps, walking with the aid of a cane. FORTUNÉ *retires.*

AGNES.

Duke of St. Olpherts?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Bowing.*] Mrs. Ebbsmith?

AGNES.

Mr. Cleeve would have opposed this rather out-of-the-way proceeding of mine. He doesn't know I have asked you to call on me to-day.

ST. OLPHERTS.

So I conclude. It gives our meeting a pleasant air of adventure.

AGNES.

I shall tell him directly he returns.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Gallantly.*] And destroy a cherished secret.

AGNES.

You are an invalid; [*motioning him to be seated*] pray don't stand. [*Sitting.*] Your Grace is a man who takes life lightly. It will relieve you to hear that I wish to keep sentiment out of any business we have together.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I believe I haven't the reputation of being a sentimental man. [*Seating himself.*] You send for me, Mrs. Ebbsmith—

To tell you I have come to regard the suggestion you were good enough to make a week ago—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Suggestion?

AGNES.

Shakespeare, the musical glasses, you know—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, yes. Ha! ha!

AGNES.

I've come to think it a reasonable one. At the moment I considered it a gross impertinence.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Written requests are so dependent on a sympathetic reader.

AGNES.

That meeting might have saved you time and trouble.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I grudge neither.

AGNES.

It might perhaps have shown your Grace that your view of life is too narrow; that your method of dealing with its problems wants variety; that, in point of fact, your employment upon your present mission is distinctly inappropriate. Our meeting to-day may serve the same purpose.

ST. OLPHERTS.

My view of life?

AGNES.

That all men and women may safely be judged by the standards of the casino and the dancing-garden.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I have found those standards not altogether untrustworthy. My method—?



AGNES.

To scoff, to sneer, to ridicule.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ah! And how much is there, my dear Mrs. Ebbsmith, belonging to humanity that survives being laughed at?

AGNES.

More than you credit, duke. For example, I—I think it possible you may not succeed in grinning away the compact between Mr. Cleeve and myself.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Compact?

AGNES.

Between serious man and woman.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Serious *woman.*

AGNES.

Ah, at least you must see that—serious woman. [*Rising, facing him.*] You can't fail to realize, even from this slight personal knowledge of me, that you are not dealing just now with some poor, feeble ballet-girl.

ST. OLPHERTS.

But how well you put it! [*Rising.*] And how frank of you to furnish, as it were, a plan of the fortifications to the—the—

AGNES.

Why do you stick at "enemy"?

ST. OLPHERTS.

It's not the word. Opponent! For the moment, per-



haps, opponent. I am never an enemy, I hope, where your sex is concerned.

AGNES.

No, I am aware that you are not overnice in the bestowal of your patronage—where my sex is concerned.

ST. OLPHERTS.

You regard my appearance in an affair of morals as a quaint one.

AGNES.

Your Grace is beginning to know me.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Dear lady, you take pride, I hear, in belonging to—The People. You would delight me amazingly by giving me an inkling of the popular notion of my career.

AGNES.

[*Walking away.*] Excuse me.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Following her.*] Please! It would be instructive, perhaps chastening. I entreat.

AGNES.

No.

ST. OLPHERTS.

You are letting sentiment intrude itself. [*Sitting, in pain.*] I challenge you.

AGNES.

At Eton you were curiously precocious. The head-master, referring to your aptitude with books, prophesied a brilliant future for you; your tutor, alarmed by your attachment



to a certain cottage at Ascot which was minus a host, thanked his stars to be rid of you. At Oxford you closed all books, except, of course, betting-books.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I detected the tendency of the age—scholarship for the masses. I considered it my turn to be merely intuitively intelligent.

AGNES.

You left Oxford a gambler and spendthrift. A year or two in town established you as an amiable, undisguised debauchee. The rest is modern history.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Complete your sketch. Don't stop at the—rude outline.

AGNES.

Your affairs falling into disorder, you promptly married a wealthy woman—the poor, rich lady who has for some years honoured you by being your duchess at a distance. This burlesque of marriage helped to reassure your friends, and actually obtained for you an ornamental appointment for which an over-taxed nation provides a handsome stipend. But, to sum up, you must always remain an irritating source of uneasiness to your own order, as, luckily, you will always be a sharp-edged weapon in the hands of mine.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*With a polite smile.*] Yours! Ah, to that small, unruly section to which I understand you particularly attach yourself. To the—

AGNES.

[*With changed manner, flashing eyes, harsh voice, and violent gestures.*] The sufferers, the toilers; that great crowd of old and young—old and young stamped by ex-

cessive labour and privation all of one pattern—whose backs bend under burdens, whose bones ache and grow awry, whose skins, in youth and in age, are wrinkled and yellow; those from whom a fair share of the earth's space and of the light of day is withheld. [*Looking down upon him fiercely.*] The half-starved who are bidden to stand with their feet in the kennel to watch gay processions in which you and your kind are borne high. Those who would strip the robes from a dummy aristocracy and cast the broken dolls into the limbo of a nation's discarded toys. Those who —mark me!—are already upon the highway, marching, marching; whose time is coming as surely as yours is going!

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Clapping his hands gently.*] Bravo! bravo! Really a flash of the old fire. Admirable! [*She walks away to the window with an impatient exclamation.*] Your present *affaire du cœur* does not wholly absorb you then, Mrs. Ebbsmith. Even now the murmurings of love have not entirely superseded the thunderous denunciations of—h'm—you once bore a nickname, my dear.

AGNES.

[*Turning sharply.*] Ho, so you've heard *that*, have you!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, yes.

AGNES.

Mad—Agnes? [*He bows deprecatingly.*] We appear to have studied each other's history pretty closely.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Dear lady, this is not the first time the same roof has covered us.

AGNES.

No?



ST. OLPHERTS.

Five years ago, on a broiling night in July, I joined a party of men who made an excursion from a club-house in St. James's Street to the unsavoury district of St. Luke's.

AGNES.

Oh, yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

A depressin' building; the Iron Hall, Barker Street—no —Carter Street.

AGNES.

Precisely.

ST. OLPHERTS.

We took our places amongst a handful of frowsy folks who cracked nuts and blasphemed. On the platform stood a gaunt, white-faced young lady resolutely engaged in making up by extravagance of gesture for the deficiencies of an exhausted voice. "There," said one of my companions, "that is the notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith." Upon which a person near us, whom I judged from his air of leaden laziness to be a British working man, blurted out, "Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith! Mad Agnes! That's the name her sanguinary friends give her—Mad Agnes!" At that moment the eye of the panting oratress caught mine for an instant and you and I first met.

AGNES.

[*Passing her hand across her brow, thoughtfully.*] Mad —Agnes . . . [*To him, with a grim smile.*] We have both been criticised, in our time, pretty sharply, eh, duke?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes. Let that reflection make you more charitable to a poor peer. [*A knock at the door.*

AGNES.

Entrez!

[FORTUNÉ *and* ANTONIO *enter,* ANTONIO *carrying tea, etc., upon a tray.*

AGNES.

[*To* ST. OLPHERTS.] You drink tea—fellow-sufferer?

[*He signifies assent.* FORTUNÉ *places the tray on the table, then withdraws with* ANTONIO. AGNES *pours out tea.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Producing a little box from his waistcoat pocket.*] No milk, dear lady. May I be allowed—saccharine:

[*She hands him his cup of tea; their eyes meet.*

AGNES.

[*Scornfully.*] Tell me now—really—why do the Cleeves send a rip like you to do their serious work?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Laughing heartily.*] Ha, ha, ha! Rip! ha, ha! Poor solemn family! Oh, set a thief to catch a thief, you know. That, I presume, is their motive.

AGNES.

[*Pausing in the act of pouring out tea and staring at him.*] What do you mean?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Sipping his tea.*] Set a thief to catch a thief. And, by deduction, set one sensualist who, after all, doesn't take the trouble to deceive himself, to rescue another who does.

AGNES.

If I understand you, that is an insinuation against Mr. Cleeve.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Insinuation!—

AGNES.

[*Looking at him fixedly.*] Make yourself clearer.

ST. OLPHERTS.

You have accused me, Mrs. Ebbsmith, of narrowness of outlook. In the present instance, dear lady, it is *your* judgment which is at fault.

AGNES.

Mine?

ST. OLPHERTS.

It is not I who fall into the error of confounding you with the designing *danseuse* of commerce; it is, strangely enough, you who have failed in your estimate of Mr. Lucas Cleeve.

AGNES.

What is my estimate?

ST. OLPHERTS.

I pay you the compliment of believing that you have looked upon my nephew as a talented young gentleman whose future was seriously threatened by domestic disorder; a young man of a certain courage and independence, with a share of the brain and spirit of those terrible human pests called reformers; the one young gentleman, in fact, most likely to aid you in advancing your vivacious social and political tenets. You have had such thoughts in your mind?

AGNES.

I don't deny it.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ah! But what is the real, the actual Lucas Cleeve?

AGNES.

Well—what is the real Lucas Cleeve?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Poor dear fellow! I'll tell you. [*Going to the table to deposit his cup there; while she watches him, her hands tightly clasped, a frightened look in her eyes.*] The real Lucas Cleeve. [*Coming back to her.*] An egoist. An egoist.

AGNES.

An egoist. Yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Possessing ambition without patience, self-esteem without self-confidence.

AGNES.

Well?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Afflicted with a desperate craving for the opium-like drug, adulation; persistently seeking the society of those whose white, pink-tipped fingers fill the pernicious pipe most deftly and delicately. Eh?

AGNES.

I didn't— Pray go on.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ha, I remember they looked to his marriage to check his dangerous fancy for the flutter of lace, the purr of pretty women. And now, here he is—loose again.

AGNES.

[*Suffering.*] Oh!—

ST. OLPHERTS.

In short, in intellect still nothing but a callow boy; in body, nervous, bloodless, hysterical; in morals—an Epicure.



AGNES.

Have done! Have done!

ST. OLPHERTS.

"Epicure" offends you. A vain woman would find consolation in the word.

AGNES.

Enough of it! Enough! Enough!

[*She turns away, beating her hands together. The light in the room has gradually become subdued; the warm tinge of sunset now colours the scene outside the windows.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*With a shrug of his shoulders.*] The real Lucas Cleeve.

AGNES.

No, no! untrue! untrue! [LUCAS *enters. The three remain silent for a moment.*] The Duke of St. Olpherts calls in answer to a letter I wrote to him yesterday. I wanted to make his acquaintance. [*She goes out.*

LUCAS.

[*After a brief pause.*] By a lucky accident the tables were crowded at Florian's; I might have missed the chance of welcoming you. In God's name, duke, why must you come here?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Fumbling in his pockets for a note.*] In God's name? You bring the orthodoxy into this queer firm then, Lucas? [*Handing the note to* LUCAS.] A peremptory summons.

LUCAS.

You need not have obeyed it. [ST. OLPHERTS *takes a*

cigarette from his case and limps away.] I looked about for you just now. I wanted to see you.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Lighting the cigarette.*] How fortunate!—

LUCAS.

To tell you that this persecution must come to an end. It has made me desperately wretched for a whole week.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Persecution?

LUCAS.

Temptation.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Dear Lucas, the process of inducing a man to return to his wife isn't generally described as temptation.

LUCAS.

Ah, I won't hear another word of that proposal. [ST. OLPHERTS *shrugs his shoulders.*] I say my people are offering me, through you, a deliberate temptation to be a traitor. To which of these two women—my wife or [*pointing to the door*] to her—am I really bound now? It may be regrettable, scandalous, but the common rules of right and wrong have ceased to apply here. Finally, duke—and this is my message—I intend to keep faith with the woman who sat by my bedside in Rome, the woman to whom I shouted my miserable story in my delirium, the woman whose calm, resolute voice healed me, hardened me, renewed in me the desire to live.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ah! Oh, these modern nurses, in their greys, or browns, and snowy bibs! They have much to answer for, dear Lucas.

LUCAS.

No, no! Why will you persist, all of you, in regarding this as a mere morbid infatuation bred in the fumes of pastilles? It isn't so! Laugh if you care to!—but this is a meeting of affinities, of the solitary man and the truly sympathetic woman.

ST. OLPHERTS.

And oh, oh, these sympathetic women!

LUCAS.

No! Oh, the unsympathetic women! There you have the cause of half the world's misery. The unsympathetic women—you should have loved one of them.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I daresay I've done that in my time.

LUCAS.

Love one of these women—*I* know!—worship her, yield yourself to the intoxicating day-dreams that make the grimy world sweeter than any heaven ever imagined. How your heart leaps with gratitude for your good fortune; how compassionately you regard your unblest fellow-men! What may you not accomplish with such a mate beside you; how high will be your aims, how paltry every obstacle that bars your way to them; how sweet is to be the labour, how divine the rest! Then—you marry her. Marry her, and in six months, if you've pluck enough to do it, lag behind your shooting-party and blow your brains out by accident, at the edge of a turnip-field. You have found out by that time all that there is to look for—the daily diminishing interest in your doings, the poorly assumed attention as you attempt to talk over some plan for the future; then the yawn and, by degrees, the covert sneer, the little sarcasm, and, finally, the frank, open stare of boredom. Ah, duke, when you all



carry out your repressive legislation against women of evil lives, don't fail to include in your schedule the Unsympathetic Wives. They are the women whose victims show the sorriest scars; they are the really "bad women" of the world—all the others are snow-white in comparison!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes, you've got a great deal of this in that capital Essay you quoted from this morning. Dear fellow, I admit your home discomforts. But to jump out of that frying-pan into this confounded—what does she call it?—Compact!

LUCAS.

Compact?

ST. OLPHERTS.

A vague reference, as I understand, to your joint crusade against the blessed institution of Marriage.

LUCAS.

[*An alteration in his manner.*] Oh—ho, that idea! What —what has she been saying to you?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Incidentally she pitched into me, dear Lucas; she attacked my moral character. You must have been telling tales.

LUCAS.

Oh, I—I hope not. Of course, we—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes, yes—a little family gossip, to pass the time while she has been dressing her hair, or—by-the-bye, she doesn't appear to spend much time in dressing her hair.

LUCAS.

[*Biting his lip.*] Really?



ST. OLPHERTS.

Then she denounced the gilded aristocracy generally. Our day is over; we're broken wooden dolls and are going to be chucked. The old tune, but I enjoyed the novelty of being so near the instrument. I assure you, dear fellow, I was within three feet of her when she deliberately Trafalgar Squared me.

LUCAS.

[*With an uneasy laugh.*] You're the red rag, duke. This spirit of revolt in her—it's ludicrously extravagant; but it will die out in time, when she has become used to being happy and cared for—[*partly to himself, with clenched hands*] yes, cared for.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Die out? Bred in the bone, dear Lucas.

LUCAS.

On some topics she's a mere echo of her father—if you mean that.

ST. OLPHERTS.

The father—one of these public-park vermin, eh?

LUCAS.

Dead years ago.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I once heard her bellowing in a dirty little shed in St. Luke's. I told you?

LUCAS.

Yes; you've told me.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I sat there again, it seemed, this afternoon. The orator not quite so lean, perhaps; a little less witch-like, but—



LUCAS.

She was actually in want of food in those days. Poor girl. [*Partly to himself.*] I mean to remind myself of that constantly. Poor girl!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Girl! Let me see—you're considerably her junior?

LUCAS.

No, no; a few months perhaps.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, come!

LUCAS.

Well, years—two or three.

ST. OLPHERTS.

The voice remains rather raucous.

LUCAS.

By God, the voice is sweet!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Well—considering the wear and tear. Really, my dear fellow, I do believe this—I do believe that if you gowned her respectably—

LUCAS.

[*Impulsively.*] Yes, yes, I say so. I tell her that.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*With a smile.*] Do you! That's odd now.

LUCAS.

What a topic! Poor Agnes's dress!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Your taste used to be rather æsthetic. Even your own wife is one of the smartest women in London.

LUCAS.

Ha, well, I must contrive to smother these æsthetic tastes of mine.

ST. OLPHERTS.

It's a pity that other people will retain their sense of the incongruous.

LUCAS.

[*Snapping his fingers.*] Other people!—

ST. OLPHERTS.

The public.

LUCAS.

The public?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Come, you know well enough that unostentatious immodesty is no part of your partner's programme. Of course, you will find yourself by and by in a sort of perpetual public parade with your crack-brained visionary—

LUCAS.

You shall not speak of her so! You shall not.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Unconcernedly.*] Each of you bearing a pole of the soiled banner of Free Union. Free Union for the People! Ho, my dear Lucas!

LUCAS.

Good heavens, duke, do you imagine, now that I am in sound health and mind again, that I don't see the hideous absurdity of these views of hers!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Then why the deuce don't you listen a little more patiently to *my* views?

LUCAS.

No, no. I tell you I intend to keep faith with her, as far as I am able. She's so earnest, so pitiably earnest. If I broke faith with her entirely it would be too damnably cowardly.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Cowardly?

LUCAS.

[*Pacing the room agitatedly.*] Besides, we shall do well together, after all, I believe—she and I. In the end we shall make concessions to each other and settle down, somewhere abroad, peacefully.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Hah! And they called you a Coming Man at one time, didn't they?

LUCAS.

Oh, I—I shall make as fine a career with my pen as that other career would have been. At any rate, I ask you to leave me to it all—to leave me.

[FORTUNÉ *enters. The shades of evening have now deepened; the glow of sunset comes into the room.*

FORTUNÉ.

I beg your pardon, sir.

LUCAS.

Well?

FORTUNÉ.

It is pas' ze time for you to dress for dinner.



LUCAS.

I'll come. [FORTUNÉ *goes out.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

When do we next meet, dear fellow?

LUCAS.

No, no—please not again.

[NELLA *enters, excitedly.*

NELLA.

[*Speaking over her shoulder.*] Si, Signore; ecco il Signore. (Yes, Signora; here is the Signor.) [*To* CLEEVE.] Scusi, Signore. Quando la vedrá come é cara!— (Pardon, Signor. When you see her you'll see how sweet she looks!—)

[AGNES'S *voice is heard.*

AGNES.

[*Outside.*] Am I keeping you waiting, Lucas?

[*She enters, handsomely gowned, her throat and arms bare, the fashion of her hair roughly altered. She stops abruptly upon seeing* ST. OLPHERTS; *a strange light comes into her eyes; voice, manner, bearing, all express triumph. The two men stare at her blankly. She appears to be a beautiful woman.*

AGNES.

[*To* NELLA.] Un petit châle noir tricoté—cherchez-le. [NELLA *withdraws.*] Ah, you are not dressed, Lucas dear.

LUCAS.

What—what time is it?

[*He goes towards the door still staring at* AGNES.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Looking at her and speaking in an altered tone.*] I fear my gossiping has delayed him. You—you dine out?

AGNES.

At the Grünwald. Why don't you join us? [*Turning to* LUCAS *lightly.*] Persuade him, Lucas.

[LUCAS *pauses at the door.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Er—impossible. Some—friends of mine may arrive to-night. [LUCAS *goes out.*] I am more than sorry.

AGNES.

[*Mockingly.*] Really? You are sure you are not shy of being seen with a notorious woman?

ST. OLPHERTS.

My dear Mrs. Ebbsmith!—

AGNES.

No, I forgot—that would be unlike you. *Mad* people scare you, perhaps?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ha, ha! don't be too rough.

AGNES.

Come, duke, confess—isn't there more sanity in me than you suspected?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*In a low voice, eyeing her.*] Much more. I think you are very clever.

[LUCAS *quietly re-enters the room; he halts upon seeing that* ST. OLPHERTS *still lingers.*



ST. OLPHERTS.

[*With a wave of the hand to* LUCAS.] Just off, dear fellow. [*He offers his hand to* AGNES; *she quickly places hers behind her back.*] You—you are charming. [*He walks to the door, then looks round at the pair.*] Au 'voir!

AGNES.

Au 'voir! [ST. OLPHERTS *goes out. Her head drooping suddenly, her voice hard and dull.*] You had better take me to Fulici's before we dine and buy me some gloves.

LUCAS.

[*Coming to her and seizing her hands.*] Agnes dear!

AGNES.

[*Releasing herself and sitting with a heavy, almost sullen, look upon her face.*] Are you satisfied?

LUCAS.

[*By her side.*] You have delighted me! how sweet you look!

AGNES.

Ah—

LUCAS.

You shall have twenty new gowns now; you shall see the women envying you, the men envying me. Ah, ha! fifty new gowns! you will wear them?

AGNES.

Yes.

LUCAS.

Why, what has brought about this change in you?

AGNES.

What!



LUCAS.

What?

AGNES.

I—know—

LUCAS.

You know.

AGNES.

Exactly how you regard me.

LUCAS.

I don't understand you—

AGNES.

Listen. Long ago, in Florence, I began to suspect that we had made a mistake, Lucas. Even there I began to suspect that your nature was not one to allow you to go through life sternly, severely, looking upon me more and more each day as a fellow-worker, and less and less as—a woman. I suspected this—oh, proved it!—but still made myself believe that this companionship of ours would gradually become, in a sense, colder—more temperate, more impassive. [*Beating her brow.*] Never! never! Oh, a few minutes ago this man, who means to part us if he can, drew your character, disposition, in a dozen words!

LUCAS.

You believe *him!* You credit what *he* says of me!

AGNES.

I declared it to be untrue. Oh, but—

LUCAS.

But—but—!

AGNES.

[*Rising, seizing his arm.*] The picture he paints of you is not wholly a false one. Sssh! Lucas, hark, attend to



me! I resign myself to it all! Dear, I must resign myself to it!

LUCAS.

Resign yourself? Has life with me become so distasteful?

AGNES.

Has it? Think! Why, when I realized the actual conditions of our companionship—why didn't I go on my own way stoically? Why don't I go at this moment?

LUCAS.

You really *love* me, do you mean—as simple, tender women are content to love? [*She looks at him, nods slowly, then turns away and droops over the table. He raises her and takes her in his arms.*] My dear girl! My dear, cold, warm-hearted girl! Ha! You couldn't bear to see me packed up in one of the duke's travelling-boxes and borne back to London, eh? [*She shakes her head; her lips form the word "No."*] No fear of that, my—my sweetheart!

AGNES.

[*Gently pushing him from her.*] Quick—dress—take me out.

LUCAS.

You are shivering! go and get your thickest wrap.

AGNES.

That heavy brown cloak of mine?

LUCAS.

Yes.

AGNES.

It's an old friend, but—dreadfully *shabby*. You will be ashamed of me again.

LUCAS.

Ashamed!—

AGNES.

I'll write to Bardini about a new one to-morrow. I won't oppose you—I won't repel you any more.

LUCAS.

Repel me! I only urged you to reveal yourself as what you are—a beautiful woman.

AGNES.

Ah! Am I—that?

LUCAS.

[*Kissing her.*] Beautiful—beautiful!

AGNES.

[*With a gesture of abandonment.*] I—I'm glad.

[*She leaves him and goes out. He looks after her for a moment thoughtfully, then suddenly passes his hands across his brow and opens his arms widely as if casting a burden from him.*

LUCAS.

Oh!—oh!—[*Turning away alertly.*] Fortuné—!

END OF THE SECOND ACT.



THE THIRD ACT

The scene is the same as before, but it is evening, and the lamps are lighted within the room, while outside is bright moonlight. AGNES, *dressed as at the end of the preceding Act, is lying upon the settee propped up by pillows. A pretty silk shawl, which she plays with restlessly, is over her shoulders. Her face is pale, but her eyes glitter, and her voice has a bright ring in it.* KIRKE *is seated at a table, writing.* GERTRUDE, *without hat or mantle, is standing behind the settee, looking down smilingly upon* AGNES.

KIRKE.

[*Writing.*] H'm— [*To* AGNES.] Are you often guilty of this sort of thing?

AGNES.

[*Laughing.*] I've never fainted before in my life; I don't mean to do so again.

KIRKE.

[*Writing.*] Should you alter your mind about that, do select a suitable spot on the next occasion. What was it your head came against?

GERTRUDE.

A wooden chest, Mr. Cleeve thinks.

AGNES.

With beautiful, rusty, iron clamps. [*Putting her hand to her head, and addressing* GERTRUDE.] The price of vanity.



KIRKE.

Vanity?

AGNES.

Lucas was to take me out to dinner. While I was waiting for him to dress I must needs stand and survey my full length in a mirror.

KIRKE.

[*Glancing at her.*] A very excusable proceeding.

AGNES.

Suddenly the room sank and left me—so the feeling was —in air.

KIRKE.

Well, most women can manage to look into their pier-glass without swooning—eh, Mrs. Thorpe?

GERTRUDE.

[*Smiling.*] How should I know, doctor?

KIRKE.

[*Blotting his writing.*] There. How goes the time?

GERTRUDE.

Half-past eight.

KIRKE.

I'll leave this prescription at Mantovani's myself. I can get it made up to-night.

AGNES.

[*Taking the prescription out of his hand, playfully.*] Let me look.

KIRKE.

[*Protesting.*] Now, now!



AGNES.

[*Reading the prescription.*] Ha, ha! After all, what humbugs doctors are!

KIRKE.

You've never heard me deny it.

AGNES.

[*Returning the prescription to him.*] But I'll swallow it—for the dignity of my old profession.

[*She reaches out her hand to take a cigarette.*

KIRKE.

Don't smoke too many of those things.

AGNES.

They never harm me. It's a survival of the time in my life when the cupboard was always empty. [*Striking a match.*] Only it had to be stronger tobacco in those days, I can tell you.

[*She lights her cigarette.* GERTRUDE *is assisting* KIRKE *with his overcoat.* LUCAS *enters in evening dress, and looking younger, almost boyish.*

LUCAS.

[*Brightly.*] Well?

KIRKE.

She's to have a cup of good *bouillon*—Mrs. Thorpe is going to look after that—and anything else she fancies. She's all right. [*Shaking hands with* AGNES.] The excitement of putting on that pretty frock—[AGNES *gives a hard little laugh. Shaking hands with* LUCAS.] I'll look in to-morrow. [*Turning to* GERTRUDE.] Oh, just a word with you, *nurse.*



[LUCAS *has been bending over* AGNES *affectionately; he now sits by her, and they talk in under tones; he lights a cigarette from hers.*

KIRKE.

[*To* GERTRUDE.] There's many a true word, et cetera.

GERTRUDE.

Excitement?

KIRKE.

Yes; and that smart gown's connected with it too.

GERTRUDE.

It is extraordinary to see her like this.

KIRKE.

Not the same woman.

GERTRUDE.

No, nor is he quite the same man.

KIRKE.

How long can you remain with her?

GERTRUDE.

Till eleven—if you will let my brother know where I am.

KIRKE.

What, doesn't he know?

GERTRUDE.

I simply sent word, about an hour ago, that I shouldn't be back to dinner.

KIRKE.

Very well.



GERTRUDE.

Look here! I'll get you to tell him the truth.

KIRKE.

The truth—oh?

GERTRUDE.

I called here this afternoon, unknown to Amos, to bid her good-by. Then I pottered about, rather miserably, spending money. Coming out of Naya's the photographer's, I tumbled over Mr. Cleeve, who had been looking for you, and he begged me to come round here again after I had done my shopping.

KIRKE.

I understand.

GERTRUDE.

Doctor, have you ever seen Amos look dreadfully stern and knit about the brows—like a bishop who is put out?

KIRKE.

No.

GERTRUDE.

Then you will.

KIRKE.

Well, this is a pretty task!—

[*He goes out.* GERTRUDE *comes to* AGNES. LUCAS *rises.*

GERTRUDE.

I'm going down into the kitchen to see what these people can do in the way of strong soup.

LUCAS.

You are exceedingly good to us, Mrs. Thorpe. I can't tell you how ashamed I am of my bearishness this afternoon.

GERTRUDE.

[*Arranging the shawl about* AGNES's *shoulders.*] Hush, please!

AGNES.

Are you looking at my shawl? Lucas brought it in with him, as a reward for my coming out of that stupid faint. I—I have always refused to be—spoilt in this way, but now —now—

LUCAS.

[*Breaking in deliberately.*] Pretty work upon it, is there not, Mrs. Thorpe?

GERTRUDE.

Charming. [*Going to the door which* LUCAS *opens for her.*] Thank you.

[*She passes out.* AGNES *rises.*

LUCAS.

Oh, my dear girl!—

AGNES.

[*Throwing her cigarette under the stove.*] I'm quite myself again, Lucas dear. Watch me—look!

[*Walking firmly.*

LUCAS.

No trembling?

AGNES.

Not a flutter. [*Watching her open hand.*] My hand is absolutely steady. [*He takes her hand and kisses it upon the palm.*] Ah!—

LUCAS.

[*Looking at her hand.*] No, it is shaking.

AGNES.

Yes, when you—when you—oh, Lucas!—



[*She sinks into a chair, turning her back upon him, and covering her face with her hands; her shoulders heaving.*

LUCAS.

[*Going to her.*] Agnes, dear!

AGNES.

[*Taking out her handkerchief.*] Let me—let me—

LUCAS.

[*Bending over her.*] I've never seen you—

AGNES.

No; I've never been a crying woman. But some great change has befallen me, I believe. What is it? That swoon—it wasn't mere faintness, giddiness; it was this change coming over me!

LUCAS.

You are not unhappy?

AGNES.

[*Wiping her eyes.*] No, I—I don't think I am. Isn't that strange?

LUCAS.

My dearest, I'm glad to hear you say that, for you've made me very happy.

AGNES.

Because I—?

LUCAS.

Because you love me—naturally, that's one great reason.

AGNES.

I have always loved you.

LUCAS.

But never so utterly, so absorbingly, as you confess you do now. Do you fully realize what your confession does? It strikes off the shackles from me, from us—sets us free. [*With a gesture of freedom.*] Oh, my dear Agnes, free!

AGNES.

[*Staring at him.*] Free?

LUCAS.

Free from the burden of that crazy plan of ours of trumpeting our relations to the world. Forgive me—crazy is the only word for it. Thank heaven, we've at last admitted to each other that we're ordinary man and woman! Of course, I was ill—off my head. I didn't know what I was entering upon. And you, dear—living a pleasureless life, letting your thoughts dwell constantly on old troubles; that is how cranks are made. Now that I'm strong again, body and mind, I can protect you, keep you right. Ha, ha! What were we to pose as? Examples of independence of thought and action! [*Laughing.*] Oh, my darling, we'll be independent in thought and action still—but we won't make examples of ourselves, eh?

AGNES.

[*Who has been watching him with wide-open eyes.*] Do you mean that all idea of our writing together, working together, defending our position, and the positions of such as ourselves, before the world, is to be abandoned?

LUCAS.

Why, of course.

AGNES.

I—I didn't quite mean that.



LUCAS.

Oh, come, come! We'll furl what my uncle calls the banner of Free Union finally. [*Going to her, and kissing her hair lightly.*] For the future, mere man and woman. [*Pacing the room excitedly.*] The future! I've settled everything already. The work shall fall wholly on *my* shoulders. My poor girl, you shall enjoy a little rest and pleasure.

AGNES.

[*In a low voice.*] Rest and pleasure—

LUCAS.

We'll remain abroad. One can live unobserved abroad, without actually hiding. [*She rises slowly.*] We'll find an ideal retreat. No more English tourists prying round us! And there, in some beautiful spot, alone except for your company, I'll work! [*As he paces the room, she walks slowly to and fro, listening, staring before her.*] I'll work. My new career! I'll write under a *nom de plume.* My books, Agnes, shall never ride to popularity on the back of a scandal. Our life! The mornings I must spend by myself, of course, shut up in my room. In the afternoon we will walk together. After dinner you shall hear what I've written in the morning; and then a few turns round our pretty garden, a glance at the stars with my arm about your waist—[*She stops abruptly, a look of horror on her face.*] While you whisper to me words of tenderness, words of—[*There is the distant sound of music of mandolin and guitar.*] Ah? [*To* AGNES.] Keep your shawl over your shoulders. [*Opening the window and stepping out; the music becoming louder.*] Some mandolinisti, in a gondola. [*Listening at the window, his head turned from her.*] How pretty, Agnes! Now, don't those mere sounds, in such surroundings, give you a sensation of hatred for revolt and turmoil! Don't they conjure up alluringly pictures of peace



and pleasure, of golden days and star-lit nights—pictures of beauty and of love?

AGNES.

[*Sitting on the settee, staring before her, speaking to herself.*] My marriage—the early days of my marriage—all over again!

LUCAS.

[*Turning to her.*] Eh? [*Closing the window, and coming down to her as the music dies away.*] Tell me that those sounds thrill you.

AGNES.

Lucas—

LUCAS.

[*Sitting beside her.*] Yes?

AGNES.

For the first few months of my marriage—[*Breaking off abruptly, and looking into his face wonderingly.*] Why, how young you seem to have become; you look quite boyish!

LUCAS.

[*Laughing.*] I believe that this return of our senses will make us both young again.

AGNES.

Both? [*With a little shudder.*] You know, I'm older than you.

LUCAS.

Tsch!

AGNES.

[*Passing her hand through his hair.*] Yes, I shall feel that *now*. [*Stroking his brow tenderly.*] Well—so it has come to this.



LUCAS.

I declare you have colour in your cheeks already.

AGNES.

The return of my senses?

LUCAS.

My dear Agnes, we've both been to the verge of madness, you and I—driven there by our troubles. [*Taking her hand.*] Let us agree, in so many words, that we have completely recovered. Shall we?

AGNES.

Perhaps mine is a more obstinate case. My enemies called me mad years ago.

LUCAS.

[*With a wave of the hand.*] Ah, but the future, the future. No more thoughts of reforming unequal laws from public platforms, no more shrieking in obscure magazines. No more beating of bare knuckles against stone walls. Come, say it!

AGNES.

[*With an effort.*] Go on.

LUCAS.

[*Looking before him—partly to himself, his voice hardening.*] I'll never be mad again—never. [*Throwing his head back.*] By heavens! [*To her, in an altered tone.*] You don't say it.

AGNES.

[*After a pause.*] I—I will never be mad again.

LUCAS.

[*Triumphantly.*] Hah! ha, ha! [*She deliberately removes the shawl from about her shoulders and, putting her arms around his neck, draws him to her.*] Ah, my dear girl.

AGNES.

[*In a whisper with her head on his breast.*] Lucas.

LUCAS.

Yes.

AGNES.

Isn't *this* madness?

LUCAS.

I don't think so.

AGNES.

Oh! oh! oh! I believe, to be a woman is to be mad.

LUCAS.

No, to be a woman trying not to be a woman—*that* is to be mad.

[*She draws a long, deep breath, then, sitting away from him, resumes her shawl mechanically.*

AGNES.

Now, you promised me to run out to the Capello Nero to get a little food.

LUCAS.

Oh, I'd rather—

AGNES.

[*Rising.*] Dearest, you need it.

LUCAS.

[*Rising.*] Well—Fortuné shall fetch my hat and coat.



AGNES.

Fortuné! Are you going to take *all* my work from me?

[*She is walking towards the door; the sound of his voice stops her.*

LUCAS.

Agnes! [*She returns.*] A thousand thoughts have rushed through my brain this last hour or two. I've been thinking —my wife—

AGNES.

Yes?

LUCAS.

My wife—she will soon get tired of her present position. If, by and by, there should be a divorce, there would be nothing to prevent our marrying.

AGNES.

Our—marrying!

LUCAS.

[*Sitting, not looking at her, as if discussing the matter with himself.*] It might be to my advantage to settle again in London some day. After all, scandals quickly lose their keen edge. What would you say?

AGNES.

Marriage—

LUCAS.

Ah, remember, we're rational beings for the future. However, we needn't talk about it now.

AGNES.

No.

LUCAS.

Still, I assume you wouldn't oppose it. You would marry me if I wished it?



AGNES.

[*In a low voice.*] Yes.

LUCAS.

That's a sensible girl! By Jove, I *am* hungry!

[*He lights a cigarette, as she walks slowly to the door, then throws himself idly back on the settee.*

AGNES.

[*To herself, in a whisper.*] My old life—my old life coming all over again!

[*She goes out. He lies watching the wreaths of tobacco smoke. After a moment or two,* FORTUNÉ *enters, closing the door behind him carefully.*

LUCAS.

Eh?

FORTUNÉ.

[*After a glance round, dropping his voice.*] Ze Duke of Saint Olphert 'e say 'e vould like to speak a meenit alone.

[LUCAS *rises, with a muttered exclamation of annoyance.*

LUCAS.

Priez Monsieur le duc d'entrer.

[FORTUNÉ *goes to the door and opens it. The* DUKE OF ST. OLPHERTS *enters; he is in evening dress.* FORTUNÉ *retires.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Quite alone?

LUCAS.

For the moment.

ST. OLPHERTS.

My excuse to Mrs. Ebbsmith for not dining at the Grün-



wald—it was a perfectly legitimate one, dear Lucas. I was really expecting visitors.

LUCAS.

[*Wonderingly.*] Yes?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*With a little cough and a drawn face.*] Oh, I am not so well to-night. Damn these people for troubling me! Damn 'em for keeping me hopping about! Damn 'em for every shoot I feel in my leg. Visitors from England—they've arrived.

LUCAS.

But what—?

ST. OLPHERTS.

I shall die of gout some day, Lucas. Er—your wife is here.

LUCAS.

Sybil!

ST. OLPHERTS.

She's come through with your brother. Sandford's a worse prig than ever—and I'm in shockin' pain.

LUCAS.

This—this is your doing!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes. Damn you, don't keep me standing!

[AGNES *enters, with* LUCAS's *hat and coat. She stops abruptly on seeing* ST. OLPHERTS.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*By the settee—playfully, through his pain.*] Ah, my dear Mrs. Ebbsmith, how can you have the heart to de-

ceive an invalid, a poor wretch who begs you [*sitting on the settee*] to allow him to sit down for a moment?

[AGNES *deposits the hat and coat.*

AGNES.

Deceive?—

ST. OLPHERTS.

My friends arrive, I dine scrappily with them, and hurry to the Grünwald thinking to catch you over your Zabajone. Dear lady, you haven't been *near* the Grünwald.

AGNES.

Your women faint sometimes, don't they?

ST. OLPHERTS.

My—? [*In pain.*] Oh, what *do* you mean?

AGNES.

The women in your class of life?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Faint? oh, yes, when there's occasion for it.

AGNES.

I'm hopelessly low-born; I fainted involuntarily.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Moving nearer to her.*] Oh, my dear, pray forgive me. You've recovered? [*She nods.*] Indisposition agrees with you, evidently. Your colouring to-night is charming. [*Coughing.*] You are—delightful—to—look at.

[GERTRUDE *enters, carrying a tray on which are a bowl of soup, a small decanter of wine, and accessories. She looks at* ST. OLPHERTS *unconcernedly, then turns away and places the tray on a table.*



ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Quietly to* AGNES.] Not a servant?

AGNES.

Oh, no.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Rising promptly.*] Good God! I beg your pardon. A friend?

AGNES.

Yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Looking at* GERTRUDE, *critically.*] Very nice. [*Still looking at* GERTRUDE, *but speaking to* AGNES *in undertones.*] Married or—? [*Turning to* AGNES.] Married or—?

[AGNES *has walked away.*

GERTRUDE.

[*To* LUCAS, *looking round.*] It is draughty at this table.

LUCAS.

[*Going to the table near the settee and collecting the writing materials.*] Here—

[AGNES *joins* GERTRUDE.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Quietly to* LUCAS.] Lucas— [LUCAS *goes to him.*] Who's that gal?

LUCAS.

[*To* ST. OLPHERTS.] An hotel acquaintance we made in Florence—Mrs. Thorpe.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Where's the husband?

LUCAS.

A widow.

ST. OLPHERTS.

You might—

[GERTRUDE *advances with the tray.*

LUCAS.

Mrs. Thorpe, the Duke of St. Olpherts asks me to present you to him.

[GERTRUDE *inclines her head to the* DUKE. LUCAS *places the writing materials on another table.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Limping up to* GERTRUDE *and handling the tray.*] I beg to be allowed to help you. [*At the table.*] The tray here?

GERTRUDE.

Thank you.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ha, how clumsy I am! We think it so gracious of you to look after our poor friend here who is not quite herself to-day. [*To* AGNES.] Come along, dear lady—everything is prepared for you. [*To* GERTRUDE.] You are here with —with your mother, I understand.

GERTRUDE.

My brother.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Brother. Now, do tell me whether you find your—your little hotel comfortable.

GERTRUDE.

[*Looking at him steadily.*] We don't stay at one.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Apartments?



GERTRUDE.

Yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Do you know, dear Mrs. Thorpe, I have always had the very strongest desire to live in lodgings in Venice?

GERTRUDE.

You should gratify it. Our quarters are rather humble; we are in the Campo San Bartolomeo.

ST. OLPHERTS.

But how delightful!

GERTRUDE.

Why not come and see our rooms?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Rising.*] My dear young lady! [*Producing a pencil and writing upon his shirt-cuff.*] Campo San Bartolomeo—

GERTRUDE.

Five—four—nought—two.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Writing.*] Five—four—nought—two. To-morrow afternoon? [*She inclines her head.*] Four o'clock?

GERTRUDE.

Yes; that would give the people ample time to tidy and clear up after us.

ST. OLPHERTS.

After you—?

GERTRUDE.

After our departure. My brother and I leave early to-morrow morning.



ST. OLPHERTS.

[*After a brief pause, imperturbably.*] A thousand thanks. May I impose myself so far upon you as to ask you to tell your landlord to expect me? [*Taking up his hat and stick.*] We are allowing this soup to get cold. [*Joining* LUCAS.] Dear Lucas, you have something to say to me—?

LUCAS.

[*Opening the door.*] Come into my room.

[*They go out. The two women look at each other significantly.*

AGNES.

You're a splendid woman.

GERTRUDE.

That's rather a bad man, I think. Now, dear—

[*She places* AGNES *on the settee and sets the soup, etc., before her.* AGNES *eats.*

GERTRUDE.

[*Watching her closely.*] So you have succeeded in coming to close quarters, as you expressed it, with him.

AGNES.

[*Taciturnly.*] Yes.

GERTRUDE.

His second visit here to-day, I gather?

AGNES.

Yes.

GERTRUDE.

His attitude towards you; his presence here under any circumstances—it's all rather queer.

AGNES.

His code of behaviour is peculiarly his own.



GERTRUDE.

However, are you easier in your mind?

AGNES.

[*Quietly, but with intensity.*] I shall defeat him. I shall defeat him.

GERTRUDE.

Defeat him? You will succeed in holding Mr. Cleeve, you mean?

AGNES.

Oh, if you put it in that way—

GERTRUDE.

Oh, come, I remember all you told me this afternoon. [*With disdain.*] So it has already arrived, then, at a simple struggle to hold Mr. Cleeve?

[*There is a pause.* AGNES, *without answering, stretches out her hand to the wine. Her hand shakes—she withdraws it helplessly.*

GERTRUDE.

What do you want—wine?

[AGNES *nods.* GERTRUDE *pours out wine and gives her the glass.* AGNES *drains it eagerly and replaces it.*

GERTRUDE.

Agnes—

AGNES.

Yes?

GERTRUDE.

You are dressed very beautifully.

AGNES

Do you think so?

GERTRUDE.

Don't you know it? Who made you that gown?

AGNES.

Bardini.

GERTRUDE.

I shouldn't have credited the little woman with such excellent ideas.

AGNES.

Oh, Lucas gave her the idea when he—when he—

GERTRUDE.

When he ordered it?

AGNES.

Yes.

GERTRUDE.

Oh,—the whole thing came as a surprise to you?

AGNES.

Er—quite.

GERTRUDE.

I noticed the box this afternoon, when I called.

AGNES.

Mr. Cleeve wishes me to appear more like—more like—

GERTRUDE.

An ordinary smart woman. [*Contemptuously.*] Well, you ought to find no difficulty in managing that. You can make yourself very charming, it appears.

[AGNES *again reaches out a hand towards the wine.* GERTRUDE *pours a very little wine into the wine-glass and takes up the glass;* AGNES *holds out her hand to receive it.*



GERTRUDE.

Do you mind my drinking from your glass?

AGNES.

[*Staring at her.*] No.

[GERTRUDE *empties the glass and then places it in a marked way, on the side of the table furthest from* AGNES.

GERTRUDE.

[*With a little shudder.*] Ugh! Ugh! [AGNES *moves away from* GERTRUDE, *to the end of the settee, her head bowed, her hands clenched.*] I have something to propose. Come home with me to-morrow.

AGNES.

[*Raising her head.*] Home?—

GERTRUDE.

Ketherick. The very spot for a woman who wants to shut out things. Miles and miles of wild moorland! For company, purple heath and moss-covered granite, in summer; in winter, the moor-fowl and the snow glistening on top of the crags. Oh, and for open-air music, our little church owns the sweetest little peal of old bells! —[AGNES *rises, disturbed.*] Ah, I can't promise you *their* silence! Indeed, I'm very much afraid that on a still Sunday you can even hear the sound of the organ quite a long distance off. I am the organist when I'm at home. That's Ketherick. Will you come?

[*The distant tinkling of mandolin and guitar is again heard.*

AGNES.

Listen to that. The mandolinisti! You talk of the sound of your church-organ—and I hear *his* music.

GERTRUDE.

His music?

AGNES.

The music he is fond of; the music that gives him the thoughts that please him, soothe him.

GERTRUDE.

[*Listening—humming the words of the air, contemptuously.*]

"Bell' amore deh! porgi l' orecchio,
Ad un canto che parte dal cuore. . . ."

Love-music!

AGNES.

[*In a low voice, staring upon the ground.*] Yes, love-music.

[*The door leading from* LUCAS'S *room opens and* ST. OLPHERTS *and* LUCAS *are heard talking.* GERTRUDE *hastily goes out.* LUCAS *enters; the boyishness of manner has left him—he is pale and excited.*

AGNES.

[*Apprehensively.*] What is the matter?

LUCAS.

My wife is revealing quite a novel phase of character.

AGNES.

Your wife—?

LUCAS.

The submissive mood. It's right that you should be told, Agnes. She is here, at the Danieli, with my brother Sandford. [ST. OLPHERTS *enters slowly.*] Yes, positively! It appears that she has lent herself to a scheme of Sandford's [*glancing at* ST. OLPHERTS] and of—and of—



ST. OLPHERTS.

Of Sandford's.

LUCAS.

[*To* AGNES.] A plan of reconciliation. [*To* ST. OLPHERTS.] Tell Sybil that the submissive mood comes too late, by a year or so!

[*He paces to and fro.* AGNES *sits, with an expressionless face.*

AGNES.

[*Quietly to* ST. OLPHERTS.] The "friends" you were expecting, duke?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Meekly.*] Yes. [*She smiles at him scornfully.*]

LUCAS.

Agnes, dear, you and I leave here early to-morrow.

AGNES.

Very well, Lucas.

LUCAS.

[*To* ST. OLPHERTS.] Duke, will you be the bearer of a note from me to Sandford?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Certainly.

LUCAS.

[*Going to the door of his room.*] I'll write it at once.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Raising his voice.*] You won't see Sandford then, dear Lucas, for a moment or two?

LUCAS.

No, no; pray excuse me.

[*He goes out.* ST. OLPHERTS *advances to* AGNES. *The sound of the music dies away.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Slipping his cloak off and throwing it upon the head of the settee.*] Upon my soul, I think you've routed us!

AGNES.

Yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Sitting, breaking into a laugh.*] Ha, ha! he, he, he! Sir Sandford and Mrs. Cleeve will be so angry. Such a devil of a journey for nothing! Ho! [*Coughing.*] Ho, ho, ho!

AGNES.

This was to be your *grand coup.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

I admit it—I *have* been keeping this in reserve.

AGNES.

I see. A further term of cat-and-dog life for Lucas and this lady—but it would have served to dispose of *me,* you fondly imagined. I see.

ST. OLPHERTS.

I knew your hold on him was weakening. [*She looks at him.*] *You* knew it too. [*She looks away.*] He was beginning to find out that a dowdy demagogue is not the cheeriest person to live with. I repeat, you're a dooced clever woman, my dear. [*She rises, with an impatient shake of her body, and walks past him, he following her with his eyes.*] And a handsome one, into the bargain.

AGNES.

Tsch!



ST. OLPHERTS.

Tell me, when did you make up your mind to transform yourself?

AGNES.

Suddenly, after our interview this afternoon; after what you said—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh!—

AGNES.

[*With a little shiver.*] An impulse.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Impulse doesn't account for the possession of those gorgeous trappings.

AGNES.

These rags? A surprise gift from Lucas, to-day.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Really, my dear, I believe I've helped to bring about my own defeat. [*Laughing softly.*] Ho, ho, ho! How disgusted the Cleeve family will be! Ha, ha! [*Testily.*] Come, why don't you smile—laugh? You can afford to do so! Show your pretty white teeth! laugh!

AGNES.

[*Hysterically.*] Ha, ha, ha! Ha!

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Grinning.*] That's better!

[Pushing the cigarette-box towards him, she takes a cigarette and places it between her lips. He also takes a cigarette gaily. They smoke—she standing, with an elbow resting upon the top of the stove, looking down upon him.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*As he lights his cigarette.*] This isn't explosive, I hope? No nitric and sulphuric acid, with glycerine, eh? [*Eyeing her wonderingly and admiringly.*] By Jove! Which is *you?* The shabby, shapeless rebel who entertained me this afternoon, or—[*kissing the tips of his fingers to her*] or *that?*

AGNES.

This—this. [*Seating herself, slowly and thoughtfully, facing the stove, her back turned to him.*] My sex has found me out.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Ha! tsch! [*Between his teeth.*] Damn it, for your sake I almost wish Lucas was a different sort of feller!

AGNES.

[*Partly to herself, with intensity.*] Nothing matters now —not even that. He's mine. He would have died but for me. I gave him life. He is my child, my husband, my lover, my bread, my daylight—all—everything. Mine, mine.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Rising and limping over to her.*] Good luck, my girl.

AGNES.

Thanks!

ST. OLPHERTS.

I'm rather sorry for you. This sort of triumph is short-lived, you know.

AGNES.

[*Turning to him.*] I know. But I shall fight for every moment that prolongs it. This is my hour.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Your hour—?



AGNES.

There's only one hour in a woman's life.

ST. OLPHERTS.

One—?

AGNES.

One supreme hour. Her poor life is like the arch of a crescent; so many years lead up to that hour, so many weary years decline from it. No matter what she may strive for, there is a moment when Circumstance taps her upon the shoulder and says, "Woman, this hour is the best that Earth has to spare you." It may come to her in calm or in tempest, lighted by a steady radiance or by the glitter of evil stars; but however it comes, be it good or evil, *it is her hour*—let her dwell upon every second of it!

ST. OLPHERTS.

And this little victory of yours—the possession of this man; you think this is the best that earth can spare you? [*She nods, slowly and deliberately, with fixed eyes.*] Dear me, how amusin' you women are! And in your dowdy days you had ambitions! [*She looks at him suddenly.*] They were of a queer, gunpowder-and-faggot sort—but they were ambitions.

AGNES.

[*Starting up.*] Oh!— [*Putting her hands to her brows.*] Oh!— [*Facing him.*] Ambitions! Yes, yes! You're right! Once, long ago, I hoped that my hour would be very different from this. Ambitions! I have seen myself, standing, humbly clad, looking down upon a dense, swaying crowd—a scarlet flag for my background. I have seen the responsive look upon thousands of white, eager, hungry faces, and I've heard the great, hoarse shout of welcome as I have seized my flag and hurried down amongst the people—to be given a place with their leaders! I! With

the leaders, the leaders! Yes, that is what I once hoped would be my hour! [*Her voice sinking—weakly.*] But this *is* my hour.

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*After a brief pause.*] Well, my dear, when it's over, you'll have the satisfaction of counting the departing footsteps of a ruined man.

AGNES.

Ruined—!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes, there's great compensation in that—for women.

AGNES.

[*Sitting.*] Why do you suggest he'll be ruined through me? [*Uneasily.*] At any rate, he'd ended his old career before we met.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Pardon me; it's not too late now for him to resume that career. The threads are not quite broken yet.

AGNES.

Oh, the scandal in London—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Would be dispelled by this sham reconciliation with his wife.

AGNES.

[*Looking at him.*] Sham—?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Why, of course. All we desired to arrange was that for the future their household should be conducted strictly *à la mode.*



AGNES.

À la mode?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Behind the settee, looking down upon her.*] Mr. Cleeve in one quarter of the house, Mrs. Cleeve in another.

AGNES.

Oh, yes.

ST. OLPHERTS.

A proper aspect to the world, combined with freedom on both sides. It's a more decorous system than the aggressive Free Union you once advocated; and it's much in vogue at my end of the town.

AGNES.

Your plan was a little more subtle than I gave you credit for. This was to be your method of getting rid of me!

ST. OLPHERTS.

No, no. Don't you understand? With regard to yourself, we could have arrived at a compromise.

AGNES.

A compromise?

ST. OLPHERTS.

It would have made us quite happy to see you placed upon a—upon a somewhat different footing.

AGNES.

What kind of—footing.

ST. OLPHERTS.

The suburban villa, the little garden, a couple of discreet servants—everything *à la mode*.

[*There is a brief pause. Then she rises and walks across the room, outwardly calm, but twisting her hands.*

AGNES.

Well, you've had Mr. Cleeve's answer to *that.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Yes.

AGNES.

Which finally disposes of the whole matter—disposes of it—

ST. OLPHERTS.

Completely. [*Struck by an idea.*] Unless *you—!*

AGNES.

[*Turning to him.*] Unless *I—!*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Unless you—

AGNES.

[*After a moment's pause.*] What did Lucas say to you when you—?

ST. OLPHERTS.

He said he knew you'd never make that sacrifice for him—[*She pulls herself up rigidly.*] So he declined to pain you by asking you to do it.

AGNES.

[*Crossing swiftly to the settee and speaking straight into his face.*] That's a lie!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Keep your temper, my dear.

AGNES.

[*Passionately.*] His love may not last—it won't!—but



at this moment he loves me better than that! He wouldn't make a mere light thing of me!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Wouldn't he! You try him!

AGNES.

What!

ST. OLPHERTS.

You put him to the test!

AGNES.

[*With her hands to her brows.*] Oh—!

ST. OLPHERTS.

No, no—don't!

AGNES.

[*Faintly.*] Why?

ST. OLPHERTS.

I like you. Damn *him*—you deserve to live your hour!

[LUCAS *enters, with a letter in his hand.* AGNES *sits.*

LUCAS.

[*Giving* ST. OLPHERTS *the letter.*] Thanks.

[ST. OLPHERTS *pockets the letter and picks up his cloak;* LUCAS *assisting him.*

AGNES.

[*Outwardly calm.*] Oh—Lucas—

LUCAS.

Yes?

AGNES.

The duke has been—has been—telling me—

LUCAS.

What, dear?

AGNES.

The sort of arrangement proposed for your going back to London.

LUCAS.

Oh, my brother's brilliant idea!

AGNES.

Acquiesced in by your wife.

[ST. OLPHERTS *strolls away from them.*

LUCAS.

Certainly; as I anticipated, she has become intensely dissatisfied with her position.

AGNES.

And it would be quite possible, it seems, for you to resume your old career?

LUCAS.

Just barely possible—well, for the moment, quite possible.

AGNES.

Quite possible.

LUCAS.

I haven't, formally, made a sign to my political friends yet. It's a task one leaves to the last. I shall do so now, at once. My people have been busying themselves, it appears, in reporting that I shall return to London directly my health is fully re-established.

AGNES.

In the hope?— Oh, yes.



LUCAS.

Hoping they'd be able to separate us before it was too—too late.

AGNES.

Which hope they've now relinquished?

LUCAS.

Apparently.

AGNES.

They're prepared to accept a—a compromise, I hear?

LUCAS.

Ha, yes!

AGNES.

A compromise in my favour?

LUCAS.

[*Hesitatingly.*] They suggest—

AGNES.

Yes, yes, I know. After all, your old career was—a success. You made your mark, as you were saying the other day. You did make your mark. [*He walks up and down, restlessly, abstractedly, her eyes following him.*] You were generally spoken of, accepted, as a Coming Man. *The* Coming Man, often, wasn't it?

LUCAS.

[*With an impatient wave of the hand.*] That doesn't matter.

AGNES.

And now you are giving it up—giving it all up.

[*He sits on the settee, resting his elbow on his knee, pushing his hand through his hair.*

LUCAS.

But—but you believe I shall succeed equally well in this new career of mine?

AGNES.

[*Looking at him stonily.*] There's the risk, you must remember.

LUCAS.

Obviously, there's the risk. Why do you say all this to me now.

AGNES.

Because *now* is the opportunity to—to go back.

LUCAS.

[*Scornfully.*] Opportunity—?

AGNES.

An excellent one. You're so strong and well now.

LUCAS.

Thanks to you.

AGNES.

[*Staring before her.*] Well—I did nurse you carefully, didn't I?

LUCAS.

But I don't understand you. You are surely not proposing to—to—break with me?

AGNES.

No—I—I--I was only thinking that you—you might see something in this suggestion of a compromise.

[LUCAS *glances at* ST. OLPHERTS, *whose back is turned to them, but who instinctively looks round, then goes and sits by the window.*



LUCAS.

[*Looking at her searchingly.*] Well, but—*you*—*I*

AGNES.

[*With assumed indifference.*] Oh, I—!

LUCAS.

You!

AGNES.

Lucas, don't—don't make *me* paramount.

[*He moves to the end of the settee, showing by a look that he desires her to sit by him. After a moment's hesitation she takes her place beside him.*

LUCAS.

[*In an undertone.*] I do make you paramount, I do. My dear girl, under any circumstances you would still be everything to me—always. [*She nods with a vacant look.*] There would have to be this pretence of an establishment of mine—that would have to be faced; the whited sepulchre, the mockery of dinners and receptions and so on. But it would be to you I should fly for sympathy, encouragement, rest.

AGNES.

Even if you were ill again—?

LUCAS.

Even then, if it were practicable—if it could be—if it—

AGNES.

[*Looking him in the face.*] Well—?

LUCAS.

[*Avoiding her gaze.*] Yes, dear?

AGNES.

What do you say, then, to asking the duke to give you back that letter to your brother?

LUCAS.

It wouldn't settle matters, simply destroying that letter. Sandford begs me to go round to the Danieli to-night, to —to—

AGNES.

To see him? [LUCAS *nods.*] And her? [*He shrugs his shoulders.*] At what time? Was any time specified?

LUCAS.

Half-past nine.

AGNES.

I—I haven't my watch on.

LUCAS.

[*Referring to his watch.*] Nine twenty-five.

AGNES.

You can almost manage it—if you'd like to go.

LUCAS.

Oh, let them wait a few minutes for me; that won't hurt them.

AGNES.

[*Dazed.*] Let me see—I did fetch your hat and coat—

[*She rises and walks mechanically, stumbling against a chair.* LUCAS *looks up, alarmed;* ST. OLPHERTS *rises.*

AGNES.

[*Replacing the chair.*] It's all right; I didn't notice this.



[*Bringing* LUCAS's *hat and coat, and assisting him with the latter.*] How long will you be?

LUCAS.

Not more than half an hour. An hour at the outside.

AGNES.

[*Arranging his neck-handkerchief.*] Keep this so.

LUCAS.

Er—if—if I—if we—

AGNES.

The duke is waiting.

[LUCAS *turns away, and joins* ST. OLPHERTS.

LUCAS.

[*To him, in a low voice.*] I am going back to the hotel with you.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, are you?

[*The door opens and* FORTUNÉ *enters, followed by* AMOS WINTERFIELD. FORTUNÉ *retires.*

AMOS.

[*To* LUCAS, *sternly.*] Is my sister still here, may I ask?

[LUCAS *looks to* AGNES *interrogatively. She inclines her head.*

AMOS.

I should like her to know that I am waiting for her.

[AGNES *goes out.*

LUCAS.

[*To* AMOS.] Pray excuse me.

[AMOS *draws back.* ST. OLPHERTS *passes out. At the door,* LUCAS *pauses, and bows slightly to* AMOS, *who returns his bow in the same fashion, then* LUCAS *follows* ST. OLPHERTS. *Then* GERTRUDE *enters, wearing her hat and mantle.* AGNES *follows; her movements are unsteady, and there is a wild look in her eyes.*

GERTRUDE.

You've come to fetch me, Amos?

[*He assents by a nod.*

AMOS.

[*To* AGNES.] I'm sorry to learn from Dr. Kirke that you've been ill. I hope you're better.

AGNES.

Thank you, I am quite well.

[*Turning away,* GERTRUDE *watching her.*

AMOS.

[*Gruffly.*] Are you ready, Gertrude?

GERTRUDE.

No, dear, not yet. I want you to help me.

AMOS.

In what way?

GERTRUDE.

I want you to join me in persuading Mrs. Ebbsmith—*my friend,* Mrs. Ebbsmith—to come to Ketherick with us.

AMOS.

My dear sister—!

GERTRUDE.

[*Firmly.*] Please, Amos!



AGNES.

Stop a moment! Mr. Winterfield, your sister doesn't in the least understand how matters are with me. I am returning to England—but with Mr. Cleeve. [*Recklessly.*] Oh, you'd hear of it eventually. He is reconciled to his wife.

GERTRUDE.

Oh—! Then, surely, you—

AGNES.

No. The reconciliation goes no further than mere outward appearances. [*Turning away.*] He relies upon me as much as ever. [*Beating her hands together passionately.*] He can't spare me—can't spare me!

AMOS.

[*In a low voice to* GERTRUDE.] Are you satisfied?

GERTRUDE.

I suspected something of the kind. [*Going to* AGNES, *gripping her wrist tightly.*] Pull yourself out of the mud! Get up—out of the mud!

AGNES.

I have no will to—no desire to!

GERTRUDE.

You mad thing!

AGNES.

[*Releasing herself, facing* GERTRUDE *and* AMOS.] You are only breaking in upon my hour!

GERTRUDE.

Your hour—?

AGNES.

[*Waving them away.*] I ask you to go! to go!

[GERTRUDE *returns to* AMOS.

AMOS.

My dear Gertrude, you see what our position is here. If Mrs. Ebbsmith asks for our help, it is our duty to give it.

GERTRUDE.

It is especially *my* duty, Amos.

AMOS.

And I should have thought it especially mine. However, Mrs. Ebbsmith appears to firmly decline our help. And at this point, I confess, I would rather you left it—*you,* at least.

GERTRUDE.

You would rather *I* left it—I, the virtuous, unsoiled woman! Yes, I am a virtuous woman, Amos; and it strikes you as odd, I suppose—my insisting upon friendship with her. But, look here, both of you! I'll tell you a secret. You never knew it, Amos, my dear; I never allowed anybody to suspect it—

AMOS.

Never knew—what?

GERTRUDE.

The sort of married life *mine* was. It didn't last long, but it was dreadful, almost intolerable.

AMOS.

Gertrude!

GERTRUDE.

After the first few weeks—weeks, not months! after the first few weeks of it, my husband treated me as cruelly—



[*turning to* AGNES] just as cruelly, I do believe, as your husband treated *you.* [AMOS *makes a movement, showing consternation.*] Wait! Now, then! There was another man—one I loved—one I couldn't help loving! I could have found release with him, perhaps happiness of a kind. I resisted, came through it. They're dead—the two are dead! And here I am, a virtuous, reputable woman; saved by the blessed mercy of Heaven! There, you are not surprised any longer, Amos! [*Pointing to* AGNES.] "My friend, Mrs. Ebbsmith!" [*Bursting into tears.*] Oh! Oh, if my little boy had been spared to me, he should have grown up tender to women—tender to women! he should, he should—!

[*She sits upon the settee, weeping. There is a short silence.*

AMOS.

Mrs. Ebbsmith, when I came here to-night I was angry with Gertrude—not altogether, I hope, for being in your company. But I was certainly angry with her for visiting you without my knowledge. I think I sometimes forget that she is eight and twenty, not eighteen. Well, now I offer to delay our journey home for a few days—if you hold out the faintest hope that her companionship is likely to aid you in any way.

[AGNES, *standing motionless, makes no response.* AMOS *crosses to her and, as he passes* GERTRUDE, *he lets his hand drop over her shoulder; she clasps it, then rises and moves to a chair where she sits, crying silently.*

AMOS.

[*By* AGNES'S *side—in a low voice.*] You heard what she said. Saved by the mercy of Heaven.

AGNES.

Yes, but she can feel that.

AMOS.

You felt so once.

AGNES.

Once—!

AMOS.

You have, in years gone by, asked for help upon your knees.

AGNES.

It never came.

AMOS.

Repeat your cry.

AGNES.

There would be no answer.

AMOS.

Repeat it!

AGNES.

[*Turning upon him.*] If miracles *could* happen! If "help," as you term it, *did* come! Do you know what "help" would mean to *me*?

AMOS.

What—!

AGNES.

It would take the last crumb from me!

AMOS.

This man's—protection?

AGNES.

[*Defiantly.*] Yes!

AMOS.

Oh, Mrs. Ebbsmith—!

AGNES.

[*Pointing to the door.*] Well, I've asked you both to leave me, haven't I? [*Pointing at* GERTRUDE *who has*



risen.] The man *she* loves is dead and gone! She can moralize—! [*Sitting, beating upon the settee with her hands.*] Leave me!

[AMOS *joins* GERTRUDE.

GERTRUDE.

We'll go, Amos.

[*He takes from his pocket a small leather-bound book; the cover is well-worn and shabby.*

AMOS.

[*Writing upon the fly-leaf of the book with a pencil.*] I am writing our address here, Mrs. Ebbsmith.

AGNES.

[*In a hard voice.*] I already have it.

[GERTRUDE *glances at the book, over* AMOS'S *shoulder, and looks at him wonderingly.*

AMOS.

[*Laying the book on the settee by* AGNES'S *side.*] You might forget it.

[*She stares at the book with knitted brows for a moment, then stretches out her hand and opens it.*

AGNES.

[*Withdrawing her hand sharply.*] No—I don't accept your gift.

AMOS.

The address of two friends is upon the fly-leaf.

AGNES.

I thank both of you—but you shall never be troubled again by me. [*Rising, pointing to the book.*] Take that away! [*Sitting facing the stove, the door of which she*

opens, replenishing the fire—excitedly.] Mr. Cleeve may be back soon; it would be disagreeable to you all to meet again.

[GERTRUDE *gently pushes* AMOS *aside, and picking up the book from the settee, places it upon the table.*

GERTRUDE.

[*To* AGNES—*pointing to the book.*] This frightens you. Simple print and paper, so you pretend to regard it—but *it frightens you.* [*With a quick movement,* AGNES *twists her chair round and faces* GERTRUDE *fiercely.*] I called you a mad thing just now. A week ago I did think you half-mad—a poor, ill-used creature, a visionary, a moral woman living immorally; yet, in spite of all, a woman to be loved and pitied. But now I'm beginning to think that you're only frail—wanton. Oh, you're not so mad as not to know you're wicked! [*Tapping the book forcibly.*] And so this frightens you!

AGNES.

You're right! Wanton! That's what I've become! And I'm in my right senses, as you say. I suppose I *was* mad once for a little time, years ago. And do you know what drove me so? [*Striking the book with her fist.*] It was *that—that!*

GERTRUDE.

That!

AGNES.

I'd trusted in it, clung to it, and it failed me. Never once did it stop my ears to the sound of a curse; when I was beaten it didn't make the blows a whit the lighter; it never healed my bruised flesh, my bruised spirit! Yes, that drove me distracted for a while; but I'm sane now—*now* it is *you* that are mad, mad to believe! You foolish people, not to know [*beating her breast and forehead*] that Hell



or Heaven is here and here! [*Pointing to the book.*] Take it!

[GERTRUDE *turns away and joins* AMOS, *and they walk quickly to the door.*

AGNES.

[*Frantically.*] I'll not endure the sight of it—!

[*As they reach the door,* GERTRUDE *looks back and sees* AGNES *hurl the book into the fire. They go out.* AGNES *starts to her feet and stands motionless for a moment, her head bent, her fingers twisted in her hair. Then she raises her head; the expression of her face has changed to a look of fright and horror. Uttering a loud cry, she hastens to the stove and, thrusting her arm into the fire, drags out the book.* GERTRUDE *and* AMOS *re-enter quickly in alarm.*

GERTRUDE.

Agnes—!

[*They stand looking at* AGNES, *who is kneeling upon the ground, clutching the charred book.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.



THE FOURTH ACT

The scene is an apartment in the Campo San Bartolomeo. The walls are of plaster; the ceiling is frescoed in cheap modern-Italian fashion. An arch spans the room, at the further end of which is a door leading to AGNES'S *bedroom; to the left, and behind the support of the arch, is an exit on to a landing, while a nearer door, on the same side, opens into another room. The furniture, and the few objects attached to the walls, are characteristic of a moderate-priced Venetian lodging. Placed about the room, however, are photographs in frames, and pretty knick-knacks personal to* GERTRUDE, *and a travelling trunk and bag are also to be seen. The shutters of the two nearer windows are closed; a broad stream of moonlight, coming through the further window, floods the upper part of the room.*

HEPHZIBAH, *a grey-haired north-country-woman dressed as a lady's maid, is collecting the knick-knacks and placing them in the travelling-bag. After a moment or two,* GERTRUDE *enters by the further door.*

GERTRUDE.

[*At the partly closed door, speaking into the further room.*] I'll come back to you in a little while, Agnes. [*Closing the door and addressing* HEPHZIBAH.] How are you getting on, Heppy?

HEPHZIBAH.

A 'reet, Miss Gerty. I'm puttin' together a' the sma' knick-knacks, to lay them wi' the claes i' th' trunks.



GERTRUDE.

[*Taking some photographs from the table and bringing them to* HEPHZIBAH.] We leave here at a quarter to eight in the morning; not a minute later.

HEPHZIBAH.

Aye. Will there be much to pack for Mistress Cleeve?

GERTRUDE.

Nothing at all. Besides her hand-bag, she has only the one box.

HEPHZIBAH.

[*Pointing to the trunk.*] Nay, nobbut that thing!

GERTRUDE.

Yes, nobbut that. I packed that for her at the Palazzo.

HEPHZIBAH.

Eh, it won't gi' ower much trouble to maid Mistress Cleeve when we get her hame.

GERTRUDE.

Heppy, we are not going to call—my friend—"Mrs. Cleeve."

HEPHZIBAH.

Nay! what will thee call her?

GERTRUDE.

I'll tell you—by and by. Remember, she must never, never be reminded of the name.

HEPHZIBAH.

Aye, I'll be maist carefu'. Poor leddy! After the way

she tended that husband o' hers in Florence neet and day, neet and day!

GERTRUDE.

The world's full of unhappiness, Heppy.

HEPHZIBAH.

The world's full o' husbands. I canna' bide 'em. They're true eneugh when they're ailin'—but a lass can't keep her Jo always sick. Hey, Miss Gerty! Do forgie your auld Heppy!

GERTRUDE.

For what?

HEPHZIBAH.

Why, your own man, so I've heered, ne'er had as much as a bit headache till he caught his fever and died o't.

GERTRUDE.

No, I never knew Captain Thorpe to complain of an ache or a pain.

HEPHZIBAH.

And *he* was a rare, bonny husband to thee, if a' tales be true.

GERTRUDE.

Yes, Heppy. [*Listening, startled.*] Who's this?

HEPHZIBAH.

[*Going and looking.*] Maister Amos.

[AMOS *enters briskly.*

AMOS.

[*To* GERTRUDE.] How is she?

GERTRUDE.

[*Assisting him to remove his overcoat.*] More as she used to be; so still, so gentle. She's reading,



AMOS.

[*Looking at her significantly.*] Reading?

GERTRUDE.

Reading.

[*He sits humming a tune, while* HEPPY *takes off his shoes and gives him his slippers.*

HEPHZIBAH.

Eh, Maister Amos, it's good to see thee sae gladsome.

AMOS.

Home, Heppy, home!

HEPHZIBAH.

Aye, hame!

AMOS.

With our savings!

HEPHZIBAH.

Thy savings—!

AMOS.

Tsch! get on with your packing.

[HEPHZIBAH *goes out, carrying the travelling-bag and* AMOS'S *shoes. He exchanges the coat he is wearing for a shabby little black jacket which* GERTRUDE *brings him.*

GERTRUDE.

[*Filling* AMOS'S *pipe.*] Well, dear! Go on!

AMOS.

Well, I've seen them.

GERTRUDE.

Them—?

AMOS.

The duke and Sir Sandford Cleeve.

GERTRUDE.

At the hotel?

AMOS.

I found them sitting together in the hall, smoking, listening to some music.

GERTRUDE.

Quite contented with the arrangement they believed they had brought about.

AMOS.

Apparently so. Especially the baronet—a poor, cadaverous creature.

GERTRUDE.

Where was Mr. Cleeve?

AMOS.

He had been there, had an interview with his wife, and departed.

GERTRUDE.

Then by this time he has discovered that Mrs. Ebbsmith has left him.

AMOS.

I suppose so.

GERTRUDE.

Well, well! the duke and the cadaverous baronet?

AMOS.

Oh, I told them I considered it my duty to let them know that the position of affairs had suddenly become altered. [*She puts his pipe in his mouth and strikes a match.*] That, in point of fact, Mrs. Ebbsmith had ceased to be an element in their scheme for re-establishing Mr. Cleeve's household.



GERTRUDE.

[*Holding a light to his pipe.*] Did they inquire as to her movements?

AMOS.

The duke did—guessed we had taken her.

GERTRUDE.

What did they say to that?

AMOS.

The baronet asked me whether I was the chaplain of a Home for—[*angrily*] ah!

GERTRUDE.

Brute! And then?

AMOS.

Then they suggested that I ought hardly to leave *them* to make the necessary explanations to their relative, Mr. Lucas Cleeve.

GERTRUDE.

Yes—well?

AMOS.

I replied that I fervently hoped I should never set eyes on their relative again.

GERTRUDE.

[*Gleefully.*] Ha!

AMOS.

But that Mrs. Ebbsmith had left a letter behind her at the Palazzo Arconati, addressed to that gentleman, which I presumed contained as full an explanation as he could desire.

GERTRUDE.

Oh, Amos—!

AMOS.

Eh?

GERTRUDE.

You're mistaken there, dear; it was no letter.

AMOS.

No letter—?

GERTRUDE.

Simply four shakily written words.

AMOS.

Only four words?

GERTRUDE.

"My—hour—is—over." [HEPHZIBAH *enters with a card on a little tray.* GERTRUDE *reads the card and utters an exclamation. Taking the card—under her breath.*] Amos!

[*He goes to her; they stare at the card together.*

AMOS.

[*To* HEPHZIBAH.] Certainly.

[HEPHZIBAH *goes out, then returns with the* DUKE OF ST. OLPHERTS, *and retires.* ST. OLPHERTS *bows graciously to* GERTRUDE, *and, more formally, to* AMOS.

AMOS.

Pray sit down.

[ST. OLPHERTS *seats himself on the settee.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, my dear sir! If I may use such an expression in your presence—here is the devil to pay!

AMOS.

[*To* ST. OLPHERTS.] You don't mind my pipe? [ST.



OLPHERTS *waves a hand pleasantly.*] And I don't mind your expression. [*Sitting by the table.*] The devil to pay?

ST. OLPHERTS.

This, I daresay well-intentioned, interference of yours has brought about some very unpleasant results. Mr. Cleeve returns to the Palazzo Arconati and finds that Mrs. Ebbsmith has flown.

AMOS.

That result, at least, was inevitable.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Whereupon he hurries back to the Danieli and denounces us all for a set of conspirators.

AMOS.

Your Grace doesn't complain of the injustice of that charge?

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Smilingly.*] No, no, I don't complain. But the brother —the wife! Just when they imagined they had bagged the truant—there's the sting!

GERTRUDE.

Oh, then Mr. Cleeve now refuses to carry out his part of the shameful arrangement?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Absolutely. [*Rising, taking a chair, and placing it by the settee.*] Come into this, dear Mrs. Thorn—!

AMOS.

Thorpe.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Come into this! [*Sitting again.*] *You* understand the sort of man we have to deal with in Mr. Cleeve.

GERTRUDE.

[*Sitting.*] A man who prizes a woman when he has lost her.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Precisely.

GERTRUDE.

Men don't relish, I suppose, being cast off by women.

ST. OLPHERTS.

It's an inversion of the picturesque; the male abandoned is not a pathetic figure. At any rate, our poor Lucas is now raving fidelity to Mrs. Ebbsmith.

GERTRUDE.

[*Indignantly.*] Ah—!

ST. OLPHERTS.

If you please, he cannot, will not, exist without her. Reputation, fame, fortune, are nothing when weighed against —Mrs. Ebbsmith. And we may go to perdition, so that he recovers—Mrs. Ebbsmith.

AMOS.

Well—to be plain—you're not asking us to sympathize with Mrs. Cleeve and her brother-in-law over their defeat?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Certainly not. All I ask, Mr. Winterfield, is that you will raise no obstacle to a meeting between Mrs. Cleeve and —and—

GERTRUDE.

No!



[ST. OLPHERTS *signifies assent;* GERTRUDE *makes a movement.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*To her.*] Don't go.

AMOS.

The object of such a meeting?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Mrs. Cleeve desires to make a direct, personal appeal to Mrs. Ebbsmith.

GERTRUDE.

Oh, what kind of woman can this Mrs. Cleeve be?

ST. OLPHERTS.

A woman of character, who sets herself to accomplish a certain task—

GERTRUDE.

Character!

AMOS.

Hush, Gerty!

ST. OLPHERTS.

And who gathers her skirts tightly round her and gently tip-toes into the mire.

AMOS.

To put it clearly—in order to get her unfaithful husband back to London, Mrs. Cleeve would deliberately employ this weak, unhappy woman as a lure.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Perhaps Mrs. Cleeve is an unhappy woman.

GERTRUDE.

What work for a wife!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Wife—nonsense! She is only married to Cleeve.

AMOS.

[*Walking up and down.*] It is proposed that this meeting should take place—when?

ST. OLPHERTS.

I have brought Sir Sandford and Mrs. Cleeve with me. [*Pointing toward the outer door.*] They are—

AMOS.

If I decline?

ST. OLPHERTS.

It's known you leave for Milan at a quarter to nine in the morning; there might be some sort of foolish, inconvenient scene at the station.

AMOS.

Surely your Grace—?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, no, I shall be in bed at that hour. I mean between the women, perhaps—and Mr. Cleeve. [*Going to* AMOS.] Come, come, sir, you can't abduct Mrs. Ebbsmith—nor can we. Nor must you gag her. [AMOS *appears angry and perplexed.*] Pray be reasonable. Let her speak out for herself, here, finally, and settle the business. Come, sir, come!

AMOS.

[*Going to* GERTRUDE, *and speaking in a low voice.*] Ask her. [GERTRUDE *goes out.*] Cleeve! Where is he while this poor creature's body and soul are being played for? You have told him that she is with us?



ST. OLPHERTS.

No, *I* haven't.

AMOS.

He must suspect it.

ST. OLPHERTS.

Well, candidly, Mr. Winterfield, Mr. Cleeve is just now employed in looking for Mrs. Ebbsmith elsewhere.

AMOS.

Elsewhere?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Sir Sandford recognized that, in his brother's present mood, the young man's presence might be prejudicial to the success of these delicate negotiations.

AMOS.

So some lie has been told him, to keep him out of the way?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Now, Mr. Winterfield—!

AMOS.

Good heavens, duke—forgive me for my roughness—you appear to be fouling your hands, all of you, with some relish!

ST. OLPHERTS.

I must trouble you to address remarks of that nature to Sir Sandford Cleeve. I am no longer a prime mover in the affair; I am simply standing by.

AMOS.

But how can you "stand by"!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Confound it, sir—if you will trouble yourself to rescue people—there is a man to be rescued here as well as a

woman; a man, by-the-way, who is a—a sort of relative of mine!

AMOS.

The woman first!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Not always. You can rescue this woman in a few weeks' time; it can make no difference.

AMOS.

[*Indignantly.*] Ah—!

ST. OLPHERTS.

Oh, you are angry!

AMOS.

I beg your pardon. One word! I assure your Grace that I truly believe this wretched woman is at a fatal crisis in her life; I believe that if I lose her now there is every chance of her slipping back into a misery and despair out of which it will be impossible to drag her. Oh, I'll be perfectly open with you! At this moment we—my sister and I—are not sure of her. Her affection for this man may still induce her to sacrifice herself utterly for him; she is still in danger of falling to the lowest depth a woman can attain. Come, duke, don't help these people! And don't "stand by"! Help me and my sister! For God's sake!

ST. OLPHERTS.

My good Mr. Winterfield, believe me or not, I—I positively like this woman.

AMOS.

[*Gladly.*] Ah!

ST. OLPHERTS.

She attracts me curiously. And if she wanted assistance—

AMOS.

Doesn't she?



ST. OLPHERTS.

Money—

AMOS.

No, no.

ST. OLPHERTS.

She should have it. But as for the rest—well—

AMOS.

Well?

ST. OLPHERTS.

Well, sir, you must understand me. It is a failing of mine; I can't approach women—I never could—in the Missionary spirit.

[GERTRUDE *re-enters; the men turn to face her.*

AMOS.

[*To* GERTRUDE.] Will she—?

GERTRUDE.

Yes. [ST. OLPHERTS *limps out of the room, bowing to* GERTRUDE *as he passes.*] Oh, Amos!

AMOS.

Are we to lose the poor soul after all, Gerty?

GERTRUDE.

I—I can't think so—oh, but I'm afraid.

[ST. OLPHERTS *returns, and* SIR SANDFORD CLEEVE *enters with* SYBIL CLEEVE. SANDFORD *is a long, lean, old-young man with a pinched face.* SYBIL *is a stately, handsome young woman, beautifully gowned and thickly veiled.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

Mrs. Thorpe—Mr. Winterfield.

[SANDFORD *and* SYBIL *bow distantly to* GERTRUDE *and* AMOS.

AMOS.

[*To* SANDFORD *and* SYBIL, *indicating the settee.*] Will you—? [SYBIL *sits on settee;* SANDFORD *takes the chair beside her.*] Gertrude—

[GERTRUDE *goes out.*

SIR SANDFORD.

[*Pompously.*] Mr. Winterfield, I find myself engaged upon a peculiarly distasteful task.

AMOS.

I have no hope, Sir Sandford, that you will not have strength to discharge it.

SIR SANDFORD.

We shall object to loftiness of attitude on your part, sir. You would do well to reflect that we are seeking to restore a young man to a useful and honourable career.

AMOS.

You are using very honourable means, Sir Sandford.

SIR SANDFORD.

I shall protest against any perversion of words, Mr. Winterfield—

[*The door of* AGNES'S *room opens, and* GERTRUDE *comes in, then* AGNES. *The latter is in a rusty, ill-fitting, black, stuff dress; her hair is tightly drawn from her brows; her face is haggard, her eyes are red and sunken. A strip of linen binds her right hand.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*Speaking into* SYBIL'S *ear.*] The lean witch again! The witch of the Iron Hall at St. Luke's!



SYBIL.

[*In a whisper.*] Is *that* the woman?

ST. OLPHERTS.

You see only one of 'em—there are *two* there.

[SANDFORD *rises as* AGNES *comes slowly forward, accompanied by* GERTRUDE. AMOS *joins* GERTRUDE, *and they go together into an adjoining room,* GERTRUDE *giving* AGNES *an appealing look.*

SIR SANDFORD.

[*To* AGNES.] I—I am Mr. Lucas Cleeve's brother; [*with a motion of the hand towards* SYBIL] this is—this is—

[*He swallows the rest of the announcement, and retires to the back of the room where he stands before the stove.* ST. OLPHERTS *strolls away and disappears.*

SYBIL.

[*To* AGNES, *in a hard, dry, disdainful voice.*] I beg that you will sit down. [AGNES *sits, mechanically, with an expressionless face.*] I—I don't need to be told that this is a very—a very unwomanly proceeding on my part.

SIR SANDFORD.

I can't regard it in that light, under the peculiar circumstances.

SYBIL.

I'd rather you wouldn't interrupt me, Sandford. [*To* AGNES.] But the peculiar circumstances, to borrow my brother-in-law's phrase, are not such as develop sweetness and modesty, I suppose.

SIR SANDFORD.

Again I say you wrong yourself there, Sybil—



SYBIL.

[*Impatiently.*] Oh, please let me wrong myself, for a change. [*To* AGNES.] When my husband left me, and I heard of his association with you, I felt sure that his vanity would soon make an openly irregular life intolerable to him. Vanity is the cause of a great deal of virtue in men; the vainest are those who like to be thought respectable.

SIR SANDFORD.

Really, I must protest—!

SYBIL.

But Lady Cleeve—the mother—and the rest of the family have not had the patience to wait for the fulfilment of my prophecy. And so I have been forced to undertake this journey.

SIR SANDFORD.

I demur to the expression "forced," Sybil—

SYBIL.

Cannot we be left alone? Surely—! [SANDFORD *bows stiffly and moves away, following* ST. OLPHERTS.] However —there's this to be said for them, poor people—whatever is done to save my husband's prospects in life must be done *now*. It is no longer possible to play fast and loose with friends and supporters—to say nothing of enemies. His future now rests upon a matter of days, hours almost. [*Rising and walking about agitatedly.*] That is why I am sent here —well, why I *am* here.

AGNES.

[*In a low, quavering voice.*] What is it you are all asking me to do now?

SYBIL.

We are asking you to continue to—to exert your influence over him for a little while longer.



AGNES.

[*Rising unsteadily.*] Ah—! [*She makes a movement to go, falters, and irresolutely sits again.*] *My* influence! mine!

SYBIL.

[*With a stamp of the foot.*] You wouldn't underrate your power if you had seen him, heard him, about an hour ago [*mockingly*], after he had discovered his bereavement.

AGNES.

He will soon forget *me*.

SYBIL.

Yes, if you don't forsake him.

AGNES.

I am going to England, into Yorkshire; according to your showing, that should draw him back.

SYBIL.

Oh, I've no doubt we shall hear of him—in Yorkshire! You'll find him dangling about your skirts, in Yorkshire!

AGNES.

And *he* will find that I am determined, strong.

SYBIL.

Ultimately he will tire, of course. But when? And what assurance have we that he returns to us when he has wearied of pursuing you? Besides, don't I tell you that we must make sure of him *now*? It's of no use his begging us, in a month's time, to patch up home and reputation. It must be *now*—and *you* can end our suspense. Come, hideous as it sounds, this is not much to ask.



AGNES.

[*Shrinking from her.*] Oh—!

SYBIL.

Oh, don't regard me as the wife! That's an unnecessary sentiment, I pledge you my word. It's a little late in the day, too, for such considerations. So, come, help us!

AGNES.

I will not.

SYBIL.

He has an old mother—

AGNES.

Poor woman!

SYBIL.

And remember, *you* took him away—!

AGNES.

I!

SYBIL.

Practically you did—with your tender nursing and sweet compassion. Isn't it straining a point—to shirk bringing him back?

AGNES.

[*Rising.*] I did not take him from you. You—you sent him to me.

SYBIL.

Ho, yes! that tale has been dinned into your ears often enough, I can quite believe. *I* sent him to you—my coldness, heartlessness, selfishness sent him to you. The unsympathetic wife, eh? Yes, but you didn't put yourself to the trouble of asking for *my* version of the story before you mingled your woes with his. [AGNES *faces her suddenly.*]



You know him now. Have I been altogether to blame, do you still think? Unsympathetic! Because I've so often had to tighten my lips, and stare blankly over his shoulder, to stop myself from crying out in weariness of his vanity and pettiness? Cruel! Because, occasionally, patience became exhausted at the mere contemplation of a man so thoroughly, greedily self-absorbed? Why, *you* married miserably, the Duke of St. Olpherts tells us! Before you made yourself my husband's champion and protector, why didn't you let your experience speak a word for *me?* [AGNES *quickly turns away and sits upon the settee, her hands to her brow.*] However, I didn't come here to revile you. [*Standing by her.*] They say that you're a strange woman—not the sort of woman one generally finds doing such things as you have done; a woman with odd ideas. I hear—oh, I'm willing to believe it!—that there's good in you.

[AGNES *breaks into a low peal of hysterical laughter.*

AGNES.

Who tells you—that?

SYBIL.

The Duke.

AGNES.

Ha, ha, ha! A character—from him! ha, ha, ha!

SYBIL.

[*Her voice and manner softening.*] Well, if there *is* pity in you, help us to get my husband back to London, to his friends, to his old ambitions.

AGNES.

Ha, ha, ha, ha! your husband!

SYBIL.

The word slips out. I swear to you that he and I can never be more to each other than companion figures in a

masquerade. The same roof may cover us; but between two wings of a house, as you may know, there often stretches a wide desert. I despise him, he hates me. [*Walking away, her voice breaking.*] Only—I did love him once . . . I don't want to see him utterly thrown away—wasted . . . I don't quite want to see that . . .

[AGNES *rises and approaches* SYBIL, *fearfully.*

AGNES.

[*In a whisper.*] Lift your veil for a moment. [SYBIL *raises her veil.*] Tears—tears— [*with a deep groan.*]—Oh—! [SYBIL *turns away.*] I—I'll do it . . . I'll go back to the Palazzo . . . at once . . . [SYBIL *draws herself up suddenly.*] I've wronged you! wronged you! oh, God! oh, God!

[*She totters away and goes into her bedroom. For a moment or two* SYBIL *stands still, a look of horror and repulsion upon her face. Then she turns and goes towards the outer door.*

SYBIL.

[*Calling.*] Sandford! Sandford!

[SIR SANDFORD CLEEVE *and the* DUKE OF ST. OLPHERTS *enter.*

SIR SANDFORD.

[*To* SYBIL.] Well—?

SYBIL.

She is going back to the Palazzo.

SIR SANDFORD.

You mean that she consents to—?

SYBIL.

[*Stamping her foot.*] I mean that she will go back to



the Palazzo. [*Sitting and leaning her head upon her hands.*] Oh! oh!

SIR SANDFORD.

Need we wait longer, then?

SYBIL.

These people—these people who are befriending her! Tell them.

SIR SANDFORD.

Really, it can hardly be necessary to consult—

SYBIL.

[*Fiercely.*] I will have them told! I will have them told!

[SANDFORD *goes to the door of the other room and knocks, returning to* SYBIL *as* GERTRUDE *and* AMOS *enter.* SYBIL *draws down her veil.*

GERTRUDE.

[*Looking round.*] Mrs. Ebbsmith—? Mrs. Ebbsmith—!

SIR SANDFORD.

Er—many matters have been discussed with Mrs. Ebbsmith. Undoubtedly she has, for the moment, considerable influence over my brother. She has consented to exert it, to induce him to return, at once, to London.

AMOS.

I think I understand you!

[AGNES *appears at the door of her room dressed in bonnet and cloak.*

GERTRUDE.

Agnes—!

[AGNES *comes forward, stretches out her hand to* GERTRUDE, *and throws herself upon the settee.*

SYBIL.

[*To* SANDFORD, *clutching his arm.*] Take me away.

[*They turn to go.*

GERTRUDE.

[*To* SYBIL.] Mrs. Cleeve—! [*Looking down upon* AGNES.] Mrs. Cleeve, we—my brother and I—hoped to save this woman. She was worth saving. You have utterly destroyed her.

[SYBIL *makes no answer, but walks slowly away with* SANDFORD, *then stops and turns abruptly.*

SYBIL.

[*With a gasp.*] Oh—! No—I will not accept the service of this wretched woman. I loathe myself for doing what I have done. [*Coming to* AGNES.] Look up! Look at me! [*Proudly lifting her veil.*] I decline your help—I decline it. [*To* GERTRUDE *and* AMOS.] You hear me—you—and you? I unsay all that I've said to her. It's too degrading; I will not have such an act upon my conscience. [*To* AGNES.] Understand me! If you rejoin this man I shall consider it a fresh outrage upon me. I hope you will keep with your friends.

[GERTRUDE *holds out her hand to* SYBIL; SYBIL *touches it distantly.*

AGNES.

[*Clutching at* SYBIL'S *skirts.*] Forgive me! forgive—!

SYBIL.

[*Retreating.*] Ah, please—! [*Turning and confronting* SANDFORD.] Tell your mother I have failed. I am not going back to England.

[LUCAS *enters quickly; he and* SYBIL *come face to face. They stand looking at each other for a moment, then she sweeps past him and goes out.* SANDFORD *follows her.*

LUCAS.

[*Coming to* AGNES.] Agnes— [*To* AGNES, *in rapid, earnest undertones.*] They sent me to the railway station; my brother told me you were likely to leave for Milan tonight. I ought to have guessed sooner that you were in the hands of this meddling parson and his sister. Why has my wife been here—?

AGNES.

[*In a low voice, rocking herself gently to and fro.*] Your wife—your wife—!

LUCAS.

And the others? What scheme is afoot now? Why have you left me? Why didn't you tell me outright that I was putting you to too severe a test? You tempted me, you led me on, to propose that I should patch up my life in that way. [*She rises, with an expressionless face.*] But it has had one good result. I know now how much I depend upon you. Oh, I have had it all out with myself, pacing up and down that cursed railway station. [*Laying his hand upon her arm and speaking into her ear.*] I don't deceive myself any longer. Agnes, *this* is the great cause of the unhappiness I've experienced of late years—I am not fit for the fight and press of life. I wear no armour; I am too horribly sensitive. My skin bleeds at a touch; even flattery wounds me. Oh, the wretchedness of it! But *you* can be strong—at your weakest, there is a certain strength in you. With you, in time, I feel *I* shall grow stronger. Only I must withdraw from the struggle for a while; you must take me out of it and let me rest—recover breath, as it were. Come! Forgive me for having treated you ungratefully, al-

most treacherously. To-morrow we will begin our search for our new home. Agnes!

AGNES.

I have already found a home.

LUCAS.

Apart from me, you mean?

AGNES.

Apart from you.

LUCAS.

No, no. You'll not do that!

AGNES.

Lucas, this evening, two or three hours ago, you planned out the life we were to lead in the future. We had done with "madness," if you remember; henceforth we were to be "mere man and woman."

LUCAS.

You agreed—

AGNES.

Then. But we hadn't looked at each other clearly then, as mere man and woman. You, the man—what are you? You've confessed—

LUCAS.

I lack strength; I shall gain it.

AGNES.

Never from me—never from me. For what am I? Untrue to myself, as you are untrue to yourself; false to others, as you are false to others; passionate, unstable, like yourself; like yourself, a coward. A coward. *I—I* was to lead women! *I* was to show them, in your company, how



laws—laws made and laws that are natural—may be set aside or slighted; how men and women may live independent and noble lives without rule, or guidance, or sacrament. *I* was to be the example—the figure set up for others to observe and imitate. But the figure was made of wax—it fell awry at the first hot breath that touched it! You and I! What a partnership it has been! How base and gross and wicked almost from the very beginning! We know each other now thoroughly—how base and wicked it would remain! No, go your way, Lucas, and let me go mine.

LUCAS.

Where—where are you going?

AGNES.

To Ketherick—to think. [*Wringing her hands.*] Ah, I have to think, too, now, of the woman I have wronged.

LUCAS.

Wronged?

AGNES.

Your wife; the woman I have wronged, who came here to-night, and—spared me. Oh, go!

LUCAS.

Not like this, Agnes! not like this!

AGNES.

[*Appealingly.*] Gertrude! [LUCAS *looks round—first at* GERTRUDE *then at* AMOS—*and, with a hard smile upon his face, turns to go. Suddenly* AGNES *touches his sleeve.*] Lucas, when I have learnt to pray again, I will remember you every day of my life.

LUCAS.

[*Staring at her.*]. *Pray! . . . you! . . .*

[*She inclines her head twice, slowly; without another word he walks away and goes out.* AGNES *sinks upon the settee;* AMOS *and* GERTRUDE *remain, stiffly and silently, in the attitude of people who are waiting for the departure of a disagreeable person.*

ST. OLPHERTS.

[*After watching* LUCAS'S *departure.*] Now, I wonder whether, if he hurried to his wife at this moment, repentant, and begged her to relent—I wonder whether—whether she would—whether—[*looking at* AMOS *and* GERTRUDE, *a little disconcerted*]—I beg your pardon—you're not interested?

AMOS.

Frankly, we are not.

ST. OLPHERTS.

No; other people's affairs *are* tedious. [*Producing his gloves.*] Well! A week in Venice—and the weather has been delightful. [*Shaking hands with* GERTRUDE, *whose expression remains unchanged.*] A pleasant journey! [*Going to* AGNES, *offering his hand.*] Mrs. Ebbsmith—? [*She lifts her maimed hand.*] Ah! An accident? [*She nods.*] I'm sorry . . . I . . .

[*He turns away and goes out, bowing to* AMOS *as he passes.*

THE END.



CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

OF

FIRST PERFORMANCES

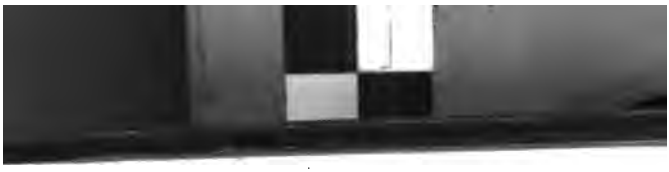
OF

PLAYS

BY

ARTHUR WING PINERO

NOTE:—This appendix has been prepared by Sir Arthur Pinero's secretary, Miss Eveleen Mills, who states,—"I send you a chronological list of the first performances of all Sir Arthur Pinero's plays, giving title of play, date of production, and theatre where produced. You will find that in the case of one of the very early plays, I have only been able to give the year of the production, and in one other case the month and year, but not the *date* of the month. This I have been unable to trace from any lists or programmes."



CHRONOLOGICAL LIST

1. *Two Hundred a Year* . .	Globe Theatre, 6th October, 1877.
2. *Two Can Play at That Game*	Lyceum Theatre, 1877.
3. *Daisy's Escape*	Lyceum Theatre, 20th September, 1879.
4. *Hester's Mystery*	Folly Theatre, 5th June, 1880.
5. *Bygones*	Lyceum Theatre, 18th September, 1880.
6. *The Money Spinner* . . .	Prince's Theatre, Manchester, 5th November, 1880. St. James's Theatre, London, 8th January, 1881.
7. *Imprudence*	Folly Theatre, 27th July, 1881.
8. *The Squire*	St. James's Theatre, 29th December, 1881.
9. *Girls and Boys*	Toole's Theatre, 1st November, 1882.
10. *The Rector*	Court Theatre, 24th March, 1883.
11. *Lords and Commons* . . .	Haymarket Theatre, 24th November, 1883.
12. *The Rocket*	Prince of Wales's Theatre, Liverpool, 30th July, 1883. Gaiety Theatre, London, December, 1883.
13. *Low Water*	Globe Theatre, 12th January, 1884.
14. *The Iron Master*	St. James's Theatre, 17th April, 1884.
15. *In Chancery*	Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, 19th September, 1884. Gaiety Theatre, London, 24th December, 1884.
16. *The Magistrate*	Court Theatre, 21st March, 1885.
17. *Mayfair*	St. James's Theatre, 31st October, 1885.
18. *The Schoolmistress* . . .	Court Theatre, 27th March, 1886.
19. *The Hobby-Horse* . . .	St. James's Theatre, 23rd October, 1886.

20.	*Dandy Dick*	Court Theatre, 27th January, 1887.
21.	*Sweet Lavender*	Terry's Theatre, 21st March, 1888.
22.	*The Weaker Sex* . . .	Court Theatre, 16th March, 1889.
23.	*The Profligate*	Garrick Theatre, 24th April, 1889.
24.	*The Cabinet Minister* . .	Court Theatre, 23d April, 1890.
25.	*Lady Bountiful*	Garrick Theatre, 7th March, 1891.
26.	*The Times*	Terry's Theatre, 24th October, 1891.
27.	*The Amazons*	Court Theatre, 7th March, 1893.
28.	*The Second Mrs. Tanqueray*	St. James's Theatre, 27th May, 1893.
29.	*The Notorious Mrs. Ebbsmith*	Garrick Theatre, 13th March, 1895.
30.	*The Benefit of the Doubt* .	Comedy Theatre, 16th October, 1895.
31.	*The Princess and the Butterfly: or, The Fantastics*	St. James's Theatre, 29th March, 1897.
32.	*Trelawny of the "Wells"* .	Court Theatre, 20th January, 1898.
33.	*The Gay Lord Quex* . . .	Globe Theatre, 8th April, 1899.
34.	*Iris*	Garrick Theatre, 21st September, 1901.
35.	*Letty*	Duke of York's Theatre, 8th October, 1903.
36.	*A Wife Without a Smile* .	Wyndham's Theatre, 12th October, 1904.
37.	*His House in Order* . . .	St. James's Theatre, 1st February, 1906.
38.	*The Thunderbolt: An Episode in the History of a Provincial Family*	St. James's Theatre, 9th May, 1908.
39.	*Mid-Channel*	St. James's Theatre, 2nd September, 1909.
40.	*Preserving Mr. Panmure* .	Comedy Theatre, 19th January, 1911.
41.	*The "Mind the Paint" Girl*	Duke of York's Theatre, 17th February, 1912.
42.	*The Widow of Wasdale Head*	Duke of York's Theatre, 14th October, 1912.
43.	*Playgoers*	St. James's Theatre, 31st March, 1913.
44.	*The Big Drum*	St. James's Theatre, 1st September, 1915.
45.	*Mr. Livermore's Dream* .	Coliseum Theatre, 15th January, 1917.



IN COLLABORATION

By Arthur W. Pinero, J. Comyns Carr, and Arthur Sullivan.

46. ***The Beauty Stone*** . . . . Savoy Theatre, 28th May, 1898.







